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A LANDLUBBER'S LOG

Around the World as Sailor and Tramp

A Landlubber's Log

AROUND THE WORLD AS SAILOR AND TRAMP

BY ARTHUR WARNER

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Published January, 1930

Jan. 27. 1930
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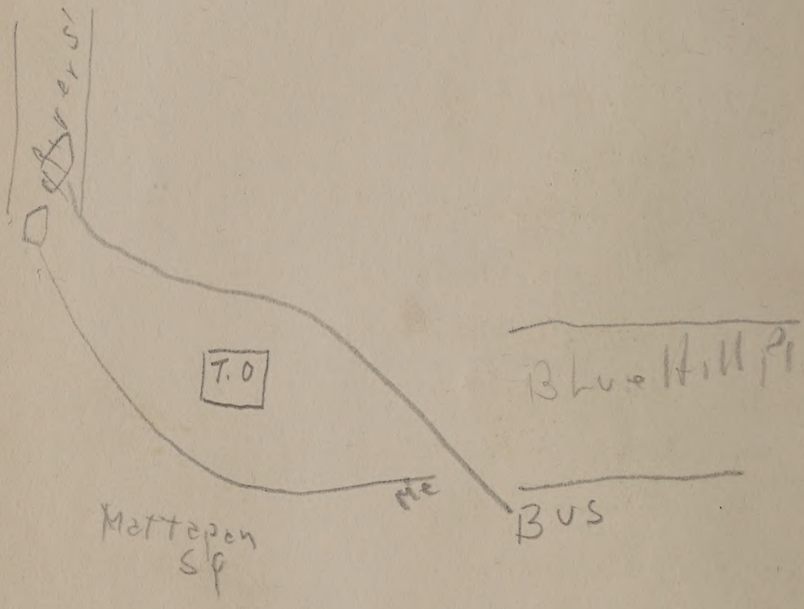
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A LANDLUBBER'S LOG

Around the World as Sailor and Tramp

I

South Street

It is only those who half know a thing that write about it. Those who know it thoroughly don't take the trouble.

—Thomas Hardy

If I had grown up along the coast, probably I should have run away to sea as a boy. This right of youth was denied me, for I was born among the cornfields of Iowa and most of my boyhood was passed about as far from salt water as it is possible to get. It was not until I had left my teens behind that I so much as *saw* the ocean. Even then its call rose above other voices. A few experiences in fishing and coasting schooners only increased my desire for wider adventures. I wanted to make a deep-water voyage to distant seas — to learn what there was on the other side of the blue horizon.

Added to this, and intermixed with it, was an insistent wish to prove my mettle to myself and others by earning a living with my hands at some job down at the foot of the ladder. By the beginning of the present century America had changed from a primitive agricultural civilization to a complicated industrial one. Sociologists, amateur and professional, glimpsed the change and, taking their cue from the physical sciences, began to shift from the academic to the laboratory method of study.

The movement was a healthy one, but of course it led to a great deal that was faddist and spurious. It became the right thing for girls just out of college to take up residence in a "settlement house" until they married one of the millionaire supporters of the institution or a day laborer belonging to one of its clubs. To their friends it didn't matter which, although to the girls later it may have seemed not quite so inconsequential. The correct fashion for young men just off the campus was to work their way to Europe aboard a cattle ship.

"Too conventional and trifling for me," I commented scornfully. I wanted *reality*. Also I wanted to see Australia and New Zealand, then attracting notice for their advanced political and industrial experiments. Why not — the project unfolded itself — why not start without money and work my way around the world by sea, stopping in Australasia?

It was in those now almost mythological days before prohibition and even before 1914 — that barrier between past and present which is coming to have almost the significance of the zero mark between B. C. and A. D. In those far-away days — when the twentieth century was in its early childhood and New York City had a population of only a trifling four million souls — square-rigged sailing ships still entered the East River, docking along South Street within quarter of a mile of Broadway's canyon and the steeple of Trinity Church.

Even then New York was no longer what Walt Whitman called it, "a city of spires and masts." Skyscrapers and loft buildings already dwarfed the once impressive churches, while square-rigged sailing ships were about at the end of their usefulness, their towering cobwebs of spars and ropes having been supplanted by vessels sprouting smokestacks and ventilators. Except —

Except that the beautiful reminders of the commerce which made New York great still held two piers near the foot of Wall Street amidst the dock houses of in-pressing steamship companies. The sailing ships were moored beside open wharves, the tips of the masts cutting parabolas in the sky, the tangle of yards and stays screening the East River like a grill. Bowsprits protruded over the dock's edge in a friendly, affectionate way, so that walking along the street one could reach up and pat the depending dolphin strikers, or gaze into the eyes of the odd figureheads at the prows. These old windjammers established thus a closeness of contact with the city of their creation; they signified their affection for the hurly-burly metropolis as does a horse reaching his head out over a fence and sniffling at your pockets for sugar, or a dog crowding his nose between his master's legs.

It seems a long time ago. . . .

"Have you ever been at sea?"

The skipper of the British bark *Northernbay*, loading for Sydney, New South Wales, looked me over searchingly, suspiciously, in response to my application for a job as cabin boy.

"I've been in fishing and coasting schooners," I replied, not going into details, of which there were not many to go into. "I want a chance to work my way to Australia."

The skipper knew, of course, that I was not telling him the whole truth. He could not be expected to believe that a young fellow was voluntarily quitting the wonder city New York to work his way in a sailing ship fifteen thousand miles to an unknown country where he had nothing in particular in view.

There is an old forecastle saying: "A man who will go to sea for pleasure would go to hell for pastime." Doubtless the skipper surmised — and in nine cases out of ten he would have been right — that I had got into a scrape, probably with a girl, and found it expedient to make a summary and unostentatious get-away. But these were matters which the captains of foreign-going windjammers did not probe too curiously. Otherwise they might have been hard put to it to complete their crews.

Anyhow the stockily built, hard-eyed man of wind-bitten, sun-dyed face before whom I stood on the after deck of the *Northernbay* could hardly have guessed — and I didn't intend that he should — that I had some sort of a degree from some sort of a college and had already made a start in newspaper work which, if not remarked by the world at large, had at least given *me* a rising sense of importance.

"I'll give you a chance," said the skipper finally. "You can turn to to-morrow."

But what was I — with some sort of a degree from some sort of a college and the tingling sensation of one who has just taken a "belly whopper" into journalism — what was I doing as a cabin boy? I was, it must be admitted, a bit out of focus. If one is going to sea as a cabin boy, it should be before reaching the twenties, even though, as in my case, one does not look one's age. I had wanted to ship as an ordinary seaman in a windjammer, but at the time New York was one of the worst crimp-ridden seaports in the world. Except for transatlantic steamships, the crews of virtually all other vessels going deep water (that is, abroad) were supplied by sailors' boarding houses. The boarding-house "masters", as sailors expressively called them, insisted on shipping all or none of a crew, and no captain wanted to risk a clash with them. I was willing to pay their fee, but I could find no one who would agree to ship me only on a sailing vessel and on one bound for the

Colonies. There were not many such, and no one boarding-house "master" could say when one of them would come to his maw.

When advised, therefore, to try for a berth as cabin boy, a place with which the boarding houses did not concern themselves, I had accepted the suggestion, and after much waiting and tramping of docks had finally walked into the job aboard the *Northernbay*, loading near the foot of Wall Street for Australia.

"Wot's yer nyme?"

"Warner."

"Wot's yer first nyme?" pursued the steward contemptuously.

"Arthur."

"Well, Ah-thah, come along with me."

This was my introduction to work aboard the *Northernbay*.

The steward, my immediate boss, was a self-important little Cockney with gooey, gray eyes and a pudgy, pink face in which were mingled weakness and impudence. He waddled down the deck with his shoulders thrown back, as cocky as a bantam rooster, all puffed up with the pride of having some one to order about. There had been no cabin boy, I learned later, thus far in the voyage.

"Ah-thah," said the steward, as he led the way into the skipper's cabin and looked about, "'ere's a pair of the captain's boots as needs blackin'."

They would have been shoes if the captain (or the steward) had been an American. But boots or shoes, they needed blacking, and as cabin boy it was my God-given job to black them. God has a habit, one learns, of giving a great many dirty jobs to cabin boys and others who are not in a position to unload them on some one else.

I blacked the skipper's boots. Otherwise I devoted myself, under the steward's direction, to polishing brass work, scrubbing floors, washing paint, dusting, and sweeping. But I soon found that my higher mission aboard was to consist of cooking and washing dishes. The steward was in no way deterred by learning that my knowledge of the first was — well, rudimentary.

"Ah-thah," he began, "d' yuh know 'ow to cook?"

I replied in effect that I knew how to boil water and prepare a few simple dishes, but that I had never been chef at the White House.

"I'll learn yuh right enough," was the cheery response. "I'll 'ave yuh cookin' fer the crew by the time we gets outside of Sandy bloomin' 'Ook. It down't matter wot they eats, the swine, an' I'll look arter the captain till yuh gets yer 'and in."

With the exception of one or two men, there was as yet no crew aboard. Practically everybody in the forecastle had cleared out when the ship reached New York from England, and no new crew would be signed until time to sail. There were six of us aft — the captain, the first and second mates, the carpenter, the steward, and myself. The procedure at meal times was painful in formality and length. First the captain ate; then the two mates ate; then the carpenter ate; then the steward ate; finally I ate — what was left.

Along with other duties it fell to me to act at frequent intervals during the day as Ganymede for the mate. He was in a simmering state most of the time between sobriety and drunkenness, and depended upon me not to let him get so sober as to be uncomfortable. Beckoning me to him, he would slip into my hand a coin and a tin bucket which he kept for the express purpose.

"Here, run across the street with this and get ten cents' worth. And don't let the old man see you, whatever you do."

"Ah-thah," said the steward one afternoon, "I want yuh to tyke some paraffin an' go over the floor of the cabin. Yuh'll find the paraffin in that locker," pointing in the direction meant. "I'm goin' ashore fer a w'ile."

The steward was all dressed up and evidently had some place to go. He went. The captain was ashore too. The mates and the carpenter were at work on deck or on the dock. There was nobody aft but me. And I — I had only the haziest notion as to what paraffin might be. Some sort of wax, I thought. That seemed the right thing to put on a floor. Anyhow, I would probably find it labelled in the locker indicated by the steward.

There were a lot of bottles and cans in the locker, but they were not labelled. I shook and smelled them all, finally selecting one which seemed likely to do as little harm as any if applied to the linoleum on the floor of the cabin. I got a rag and began work. But paraffin (or whatever I was using) was evidently not my *metier*. The goo stuck to the floor; my rag stuck to the goo; I stuck to both. But I stuck to the job too — until reluctantly convinced that I had not made a happy choice in my search for paraffin. Fortunately I had covered only a little-used part of the floor when I quit — but what a mess was there, my countrymen!

To this day I don't know what I put on that linoleum. Luckily the skipper must have been three quarter seas over when he returned and tumbled into his bunk that night.

And he went out early the next morning, evidently without noticing — or stepping on — my work of art.

Not so the steward. I was expecting a thunderstorm from him, and caught the rumblings when still far off.

"Ah-thah! Ah-thah!" he sputtered. He was too vapid a person to get properly angry or to express himself with seamanly gusto if he did. "Wot ever did yuh put on that cabin floor?"

"You told me to put on paraffin," I responded with dignity and truth.

"Yuh bloody fool; down't yuh know paraffin w'en yuh sees it?"

I didn't, but the moment seemed inauspicious for a confession. The steward sputtered on a few seconds longer, and then —

I spent the rest of the morning cleaning off the linoleum with turpentine.

How was I, an untraveled American, to know that any schoolboy in England can pick out paraffin among a score of other concoctions — that it is what we benighted Yankees call kerosene oil?

Gradually the steward took to saddling most of his work on me. One day I was peeling potatoes in the galley while the steward sat on the rail talking to a friend.

"Ah-thah, run aft an' get me a match," he ordered lazily. "My cigarette's gone aht."

I wanted to knock him off the rail into the East River. I didn't; I went for the match. I wasn't in a position to risk a row. The captain had not signed me on and clearly did not intend to until ready to sail. Meanwhile he could pay me and put me ashore any time he chose, and certainly would do so upon complaint of the steward. I felt that the second mate, who seemed to have taken a liking to me, had the right idea.

"Wait till we get outside of Sandy Hook," he advised, "and then punch the bally steward on the snout. You've got to be a hard nut if you are going to sea."

But at the end of two weeks I was about fed up. In spite of the time it had taken to get this first berth "at sea", and the effort I knew would be required to get another, I felt that the game was not worth the candle. I began to question if I was fitted for the calling of cabin boy, after all. I concluded, though, that I would not quit without my wages. This meant that I would have to get myself discharged. So I gave the steward a bit of my mind at the earliest opportunity.

"Get ashore at wunst," he roared, as soon as he could recover from his surprise.

"I'll get ashore when the captain tells me to and not before," I retorted haughtily.

"See the captain w'en 'e gets back then. Yuh cawn't turn to again with me."

But the captain was too crafty to part with two weeks' wages.

"Do you want to work on deck?" he inquired, thinking no doubt that I didn't and thus he would be rid of me without expense.

"I'd much rather," was my answer.

"Then report to the mate."

"We'll soon make a sailor of you," said the latter and sent me aloft to help in bending on the sails, for we were now getting ready for departure. But I had been at work hardly half an hour when I was ordered down.

"Get back to your work with the steward," said the skipper.

Later I learned that the shipping "master" (an agent acting for the boarding houses) who had been engaged to supply a crew for the *Northernbay* had spied me in passing by and recognized that I was not one of his victims.

"Pull that man off," he told the captain peremptorily, and the captain did. Even deep-sea skippers have to take orders — and at that period they took them from the crimps.

The turn of events didn't suit me and I said so to the steward, but in the meanwhile the skipper must have slipped him word that he would have to take me or nobody. For he told me he wanted me to stay and made promises for the future that would have put to the blush even a political platform. In common with the latter they were soon forgotten, and by the end of the third week matters were worse than ever.

It was on a Sunday morning that the crisis occurred. The *Northernbay* was to sail two days later. Without me, I had practically decided, though I was still hanging on because unwilling to give up one chance of a passage to Australia before obtaining another.

"Ah-thah, I'm goin' ashore a w'ile," remarked the steward immediately after breakfast, leaving all the work for me but no instructions about the dinner. I didn't remind him. After finishing the early work I knocked off and waited. Twelve o'clock came and no steward. Then one o'clock. Finally two o'clock. I decided to get some dinner. Not on the steward's account but because I wanted something to eat myself. I found a chicken which the steward had bought as a roast for the captain.

The steward's intentions may have been good, but they didn't concern me. I put a kettle of water on the stove, threw the chicken in, clapped on the lid — and left the rest to Fate.

A moment later Fate waddled aboard on the somewhat uncontrolled legs of the steward, returned with just enough sobriety left to be quarrelsome. It took his murky mind some seconds to grasp the fact that his intended roast was steaming away in a big, black pot. Then —

"Oo told yuh to boil that fowl?" he yelped, anger and surprise spreading over his pudgy face. Seizing a long-handled meat fork, which I had carelessly left all too convenient, he made a dart for me across the galley. "I'll show yuh oo's boss 'ere!"

This was no moment, it seemed to me, for detailed explanations or filibustering tactics. I looked for the door and put myself outside it with no delay. The steward did not follow me at once, but paused to withdraw his precious fowl from the contaminating pot. Later he came on deck, but this time he had carelessly laid down the fork. I noted the fact and watched his approach tranquilly. I could afford to be tranquil. I was bigger than the steward.

"Yuh *will* spile my dinner, will yuh?" he sneered menacingly.

"If you're so particular about your work, why not stick around and do a little of it instead of spending your time swilling beer?" I retorted with a fine moral flair as he lunged toward me wabblingly.

If this were orthodox sea fiction, I should here record how I sprawled the steward on his back and then, picking him up with one hand, heaved him over the side into the water. But as this aims to be a faithful narrative of actual events, I am obliged to confess that in what followed I did not at all distinguish myself. I am not good with my fists, and if any reader has begun this story hoping to find in it a record of gruelling (that's the right word, I believe) pugilistic feats, he is notified herewith that he is stung. A good rough-and-tumble fighter, I like to tell myself, has to be considerable of a coward; he has to take advantage of the other fellow's weakness. I have never been sufficiently ruthless to do that successfully. I like, as I say, to take some credit for it, but probably I'm just a milksop.

"Never hit soft," was the excellent advice of Theodore Roosevelt. I regret to relate that I hit that steward soft. His stupid, defenceless, oncoming face unnerved or unmuscled me. I hit it soft, but at that my fist sank as if into a mess of mush.

After that we clinched and were soon rolling about the deck in unaffectionate embrace. The two mates (disappointed in me, I am sure, because they were angry at the steward for keeping them waiting for dinner) came toward us to end the fiasco.

"Grab him by the legs," I heard one say.

He must have meant me, for I felt myself skidding along the deck on my head. Not quite fast enough, though. Suddenly a sixteen-pound shell seemed to burst against my left eye. The steward, dragged away by the head and shoulders, had found my eye with the toe of his boot when at just the proper range.

It was the only decent blow struck. For the steward was no milksop. He didn't kick soft.

I left the *Northernbay* that afternoon — for keeps. I was discouraged over the shipwreck of my effort; disgusted at my failure to deal more adequately with the steward; disillusioned with the universe in general — which meant, of course, specifically with myself. The sea suddenly seemed to be as cold and dreary a place as in fact it is. Far away as Australia was, I wished it further.

"The Lord hates a quitter," some pious moralist has said. Maybe; but hasn't somebody else retorted that the Good Book says: "Quit ye like men"? I had quit — whether like a man or a coward I didn't know then, and don't know yet.

I did know that my eye hurt me sorely — and my pride even more.

II

A TRAMP TO THE ANTIPODES

What shall we do with a drunken sailor?
What shall we do with a drunken sailor?
What shall we do with a drunken sailor,
Early in the morning?
Way, hay, there she rises,
Way, hay, there she rises,
Way, hay, there she rises,
Early in the morning.

— SAILORS' CHANTY

WE sat on the iron chain which, running between squat, heavy posts, served as a fence around the edge of Battery Park. We swung idly, listlessly, on this chain — like ships at anchor in gentle waters — with our eyes resting across the street on the grime-covered once-red bricks of the old building at the confluence of Whitehall and State streets, which in that day housed the shipping office of the consulate of His Majesty, King of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland and of the British Dominions Beyond the Seas.

When not looking at the door of the consulate — from which, momentarily, we were expecting a summons to sign on — we glanced at one another, sheepishly, sullenly, suspiciously. Sheepishly because every one knew of every other that he would not be there except that he had squandered foolishly, drunkenly, oh, so quickly, the wages of his last voyage; sullenly because he had got so little out of it, because there were not even any memories of wine, women, and song, but only a dull, confused recollection of stale beer, vulgar entertainment, and maybe a drab prostitute or so; suspiciously because these eight men realized that for longer than they liked to think ahead they were to be day-and-night, weekday-and-Sunday, thick-and-thin companions in an adventure calling for hardihood, loyalty, and skill, in which the insufficiencies of one would have to be made good out of the surplus of another.

It was a muggy, sultry morning in September. Five weeks had gone since I had left the *Northernhay*. My moment of discouragement, disgust, and disillusion had passed quickly; I had been on a continuous lookout for another vessel in which to get to the antipodes, and finally had a chance to ship before the mast in the tramp steamship *Lethington*, bound for Melbourne and Sydney, in Australia, and Auckland, Wellington, Christchurch, and Dunedin, New Zealand. I was to work my passage at a shilling a month, and was to get my discharge in the Colonies. In order to ship for the regular wages I should have had to sign for the complete voyage back to England, and although I might have deserted in Australia I probably should have had to leave my belongings behind and might have been captured and compelled to finish my service. I should have received only a month's pay in advance, twenty dollars, all or most of which would have had to go to the boarding-house "master" that supplied the crew. As a passage man I was carried as an extra hand, in addition to the seven regular sailors, and so the boarding-house "master" was not concerned with me.

Presently the men sitting on the chain fence of Battery Park get to their feet.

"There he is. He's callin' us." Some one points to a beckoning figure in the doorway of the consulate.

We cross the street, filing into the dingy hall, then into a dingier room at the back, where the chief mate and a bored-looking consular "clark" await us. Why, I wonder, are practically the only offices which sailors ever enter — those of shipping agents and seamen's rooms at consulates — so invariably drab and dreary? (That is, I wonder about it now. Then I was busy with other thoughts.) Is it that sailors may be better satisfied with their own bleak environment by comparison?

That I am shipping as a passage man calls for a word of explanation.

"Where are you to get your discharge?" asks the "clark."

"Dunedin," says the mate, naming the last port at which the *Lethington* is to touch on the route out.

"I'd rather not be bound to go that far," I interject. "I'd like to be able to leave earlier if I want to."

"All right," responds the official. "I'll leave it so you can have your discharge at any port in the Colonies — to be fixed later."

With delightful inconsistency we sign the articles first and hear them read afterward. That is, we hear a rumble in the throat of the "clark", the words "Now, boys", and then a singsong murmur out of which drifts "coal and cargo . . . three years . . . obedience to the master . . ."

A pause in the singsong monotone and the official turns upon us to read clearly and precisely the conditions in regard to wages and the time of starting (for they want to be sure you get aboard).

Then, laying down his script and assuming a benevolent and fatherly manner, he concludes with a little homily of his own of which I catch this, "Now, boys, you understand if you can't do your work you're liable to be disrated . . . mustn't leave ship without permission . . . mustn't get drunk or bring liquor aboard."

A sly snicker and then open laughter from the sailors.

"You understand."

In sober fact the agreement — the regulation British formula — which was concluded in so casual a fashion, bound the little group of sailors to work aboard the *Lethington* anywhere between 70° north and 70° south for three years, unless the ship returned sooner to her home port. As compensation they were to receive four pounds a month, payable at the end of the voyage *to those completing it*, except for one month's wages in advance — mortgaged to the boarding-house "master" — and such small sums as might be allowed, at the discretion of the captain, for spending money in ports visited by the vessel.

But as the terms of serfdom were only too well known already to the little group with whom I stood, it did not matter that in the reading His Majesty's representative skipped most and mumbled the rest, for he received not the slightest attention anyhow. All that the men before him knew or cared was that they were "outward bound." Their money was spent, their stay on shore was ended, and it would be long before they would see again the froth on a glass of beer.

Oh, well . . .

The *Lethington* was lying in the Atlantic Basin, Brooklyn, and I reached there early the next morning with all my belongings — at least all I was taking to sea — in my arms. It may be judged from this that I was traveling light, but by the time I reached the Atlantic Basin my arms insisted that I had enough for a vaudeville actress returning from Europe. All my smaller effects I carried in an old canvas suit case, including a knife, fork, spoon, and an enamel-ware plate and drinking cup, for a deep-water sailor was expected to furnish his own eating utensils. In addition I had some bulkier articles: a suit of oilskins, a sou'wester, rubber boots, a blanket, a comforter. These I rolled in my "donkey's breakfast", as a sailor calls the mattress for his bunk. It made quite a roll, though a "donkey's breakfast", as the term suggests, is none too generous in the amount of its filling.

When I sought to take the elevated railroad in leaving Manhattan I was stopped at the gate.

"Yuh can't come in here with that circus tent," was the verdict. "This ain't no freight line."

Perspiring, I staggered down the stairs and stopped a surface car. It was one of those old-fashioned cars with a front platform where passengers might deposit bulky parcels. Hastily I dropped my "donkey's breakfast", and ran back to the rear of the car to get aboard. When I claimed my roll at South Ferry, the motorman scowled.

"If I'da seen yuh put that on, young feller, yuh wouldn'ta done it." I was aware of that and had taken pains that he shouldn't see me.

Why, it may be asked, didn't I get somebody to help me, or take a cab? Because I was afraid it wouldn't seem sailorlike to go aboard in that fashion, and I was anxious to make the right impression at the start. I could, of course, have had assistance up to within a short distance of the pier. But that didn't seem quite like following the code. I was not out on a lark; I was looking for *reality*. And besides my luggage was not as heavy when I left Manhattan as when I reached the Atlantic Basin in Brooklyn. At the dock entrance the watchman stopped me.

"I'm in the *Lethington*," I told him.

He looked at me suspiciously and then "Are you a sailor?" he asked.

I didn't like the tone of his voice. It was as if he had observed, "So *this* is a sailor!" I answered with some acidity that I was.

"Well, you don't look like one," the brute retorted.

Love's labor lost! I would have done as well to drive up in a cab.

There was precious little work done by the sailors of the *Lethington* that day. With the exception of Petersen, the Norwegian, they either didn't come aboard at all until night, or slipped over the side directly in quest of a last drink. They had heard that, contrary to the earlier announcement, the ship would not sail until the next morning.

The firemen were mostly aboard and mostly drunk. Apparently they believed in doing their last-minute drinking early and so, unlike the sailors, were not obliged to be ashore at this time. A number of the firemen were in an ugly mood, and even to Petersen and me, working on deck, it was evident that some noisy quarreling was going on. In particular trouble had developed between one of the firemen and the donkeyman. In a tramp steamship a donkeyman is not one who tends donkeys. Neither is the term (he is always addressed as "Donkey") intended to convey an unfavorable estimate of his mental capacity. On the contrary, he comes next to the engineers as the best paid and supposedly the most capable man of the engine-room force. He gets his name because it is his special job to tend the donkey engine, a small one on the forward deck used to run the winches for loading or unloading cargo in port when there is no steam in the regular engines.

"T'ey moost be haffin' a hell uff a time down t'ere," observed Petersen, as an unusual racket was borne up through the shafts from below. Presently the donkeyman came rushing up on deck. He had stripped off his shirt and displayed eight inches of red and raw, black and blistered flesh across his chest.

"Vat's t'e matter, Donkey?" asked Petersen solicitously.

"That bloody 'Ooligan . . . 'e didn't like . . . wot I syes . . . to 'im." Donkey's words came in breathless snatches, his voice hoarse and high-pitched with rage. "An 'e picks up a slicer [a ten-foot iron poker] that 'ad . . . just come aht o' the fires . . . an' bli' me if 'e didn't . . . let me 'ave it acrosst 'ere. . . . I'll kill 'im fer it, s' 'elp me, I will."

The donkeyman went ashore to have his burn dressed. Luckily that was possible, as we were still at the dock, but the spot didn't heal for weeks after and must have given incessant pain.

Petersen spat on the deck, grinned at me foolishly, and we returned to work.

"T'ey're all drunk down t'ere; iss vonder t'ey doan all kill 'emselfs," he observed philosophically, and we dropped the subject. It was not a reassuring incident for one just signed on for his first deep-water voyage. I reflected on the words of the second mate of the *Northernhay*, "You've got to be a hard nut if you are going to sea."

Apparently you ought to be an asbestos nut also!

The crew's quarters in the *Lethington* (a typical tramp) were at the extreme forward end of the ship under the forecastle head, as the elevated projection of the hull at the bow is called. An alleyway led from the deck, with one door opening into the sailor's forecastle on the starboard side and another into the firemen's quarters to port.

Simplicity is the rule in furnishing a forecastle. If any period is followed in the decorations, it is that of the Stone Age. Around the sides, a double-decked row of bunks. Against the foot of the bunks, narrow wooden benches which sailors call lockers, although they are without locks or places in which to lock anything. In the center, a couple of rude boards to serve as a table. Against a wall, a rough cupboard. Nothing else.

It was a troubled night in both forecastles. I had picked out a lower bunk which I supposed to be unoccupied, but there was little sleep to be had in either the sailors' or the firemen's forecastle. Men muddled with beer or crazed with whisky were stumbling, tumbling, rumbling in. Shouts, curses, boastings, obscenities, hysterical laughter, maudlin soliloquies filled the night. Suddenly I heard a raucous voice in my ear.

"Git out av me bunk! Sink me if it ain't that blisterin' Yank."

At first I pretended not to hear and lay as if dead to the world. But the voice continued more menacingly, "Av all the cheek. Will yez git out or do yez want me to pull yez out by the hair?"

It seemed inauspicious to pretend sleep any longer. I tumbled out and straightened up. At sea one turns in practically "all standing", so I was dressed except for coat and shoes. An excited red face and a shaking fist confronted me. I recognized from the day before my shipmate Dougherty, a Liverpool Irishman, probably in his forties, thick-set but with a certain catlike lightness in his feet which is common among sailors, even those of a heavy build. Dougherty, whom even ordinarily I judged to be pugnacious, was just enough in liquor now to be doubly quarrelsome. Pale blue eyes — normally almost lost in a round, ruddy face spattered with big, buff freckles — blazed with anger, while his sparse, sandy hair stood up in tousled disarray.

"Damn cheek, I calls it," Dougherty shouted in my face. "Heave me dunnage out an' take me bunk, will yez?"

After my experience aboard the *Northernbay* I had resolved to be a "hard nut" and had come aboard the *Lethington* expecting that I should have to have at least one good fight in order to establish myself in the forecastle. But I should have preferred to tackle any one on the sailors' side in preference to Dougherty and didn't want to fight a man in liquor if I could help it. If you knock him out, it's no credit to you, and if you don't, he's likely to resort to any means to do you. Had I not just seen the donkeyman branded with a slicer?

Fortunately Mick intervened at this point. Mick was a New York Irishman, the only American other than myself in the sailors' forecastle and one of only three aboard the ship. As a fellow countryman, Mick undertook to befriend me. It is part of the code of the sea. Mick was a short, slight, wiry fellow, a scrapper from his liver to his finger nails, but at this juncture he was a messenger of peace.

"Don't bother with him," Mick said, pulling me aside. "Put yer mattress in that bunk above mine. Yuh hadn't oughta of chucked his stuff out. He wants tuh sleep in the upper bunk 'n' keep his dunnage in the lower. Yuh don't wanta sleep under him, nohow."

There had, in fact, been a few articles in the bunk, but as there was no mattress in it, I had decided it was not pre-empted and might as well be mine. Dougherty had no right to claim two bunks, but there were plenty and I was grateful to Mick for saving my face both in the Chinese and the more literal sense.

The *Lethington* left the Atlantic Basin early the next morning. It was a cheerless departure. None of the glamor that envelopes the sailing of a transatlantic passenger liner is in evidence when a three-thousand-ton tramp, carrying cargo only, casts off her lines, even though it be on a three-months' journey to the other side of the world. There were no waving handkerchiefs or friendly faces on the pier; no animated crowds aboard shouting joyous good-bys and bubbling over with enthusiasm at the prospect of the trip abroad. The pier behind was deserted and gray in the morning mist. On the decks of the *Lethington* was a group of dispirited seamen. We were no passengers; we were only the sailors that make passengers and their passages possible.

As the *Lethington* cleared the dock I put my hand in my pocket and discovered I had a nickel, a penny, and an elevated-car ticket — the last of my financial resources. The penny and the ticket I stuffed in an inner fold of my pocketbook for luck. The nickel I tossed on the dock. My hope is that it was picked up by some poor widow and used to buy bread for a family of starving children. My belief is that it was found by some dock loafer and immediately passed across the bar of the nearest saloon.

If our departure from the pier in Brooklyn was uninspiring, our progress down the bay was even less glorious. The pilot wedged us on a sandbar where we stuck until afternoon. Then at flood tide, with the aid of a tug and kedge anchor, we worked free and, heading out into deeper water, let go our hook — and waited. We had sailed with a considerable consignment of case oil (kerosene) as a deck cargo — five-gallon tins packed in individual wooden boxes. We spent the next day stowing some of these below and lashing the rest firmly on the main deck aft. By evening we were ready for sea.

"You two go into the chain locker," said the mate, motioning to Petersen and me, as the anchor began to come up. Petersen looked his disgust.

"T'at's a damn dirty yob," he informed me. "Vell, coam on."

Down we went into a dark hole just below the main deck in the extreme bow, where it was our job to stretch back and forth in a neat pile the anchor chain as it came in dripping with water and slimy with mud from the bottom of the bay.

It was Saturday night as the *Lethington* pushed slowly, lumberingly, through the Narrows, down the lower bay, and out into the open sea. On the Long Island side we could see blinking out of a purple darkness the myriad lights of the pleasure resorts from Sea Gate to Long Beach. They were gay now with the shouts and laughter of the Saturday-night crowds from the sidewalks of New York. A fireman, leaning against the bulwarks, hummed softly a snatch from a song that was heard everywhere that summer:

Take a trip up the Hudson
Or down the Bay;
A trolley to Coney
Or Rockaway.

Seasick? No, not then or later. Previous experiences at sea along the coast had given me confidence in the stability of my stomach, a confidence that subsequent voyages were not to unseat.

Homesick? Of course. Now that it was too late to turn back, I began to question the wisdom of my adventure.

I was appalled to find myself suddenly seeing eye to eye with friends who thought my project wild and foolish — and me a wastrel and a rolling stone. Wasn't I wrong, after all, in letting my work go hang to gratify a personal whim while my contemporaries were digging in, making money and a place for themselves, settling down?

Then there were my parents. I had not consulted them in regard to the adventure upon which I was embarking. I had merely written them, rather casually, that I was going. Youth is unintendingly careless and callous toward its elders. But though youth is hard and heedless in action, it is not without its moments of retrospective regret. Now, a little late, probably somewhat insincerely (because in a wave of temporary sentimentality), there came to me Stevenson's lines:

> But all that I could think of,
> in the darkness and the cold,
> Was just that I was leaving home
> and my folks were growing old.

The lights of the pleasure resorts grew dimmer and finally disappeared. Nothing was left behind but our wake, a swirling, silver spiral, while beyond a crescent moon sank into a bank of clouds on the western horizon and at regular intervals the swinging flash from the superb light on the Highlands of New Jersey ripped an incandescent gash in the darkness like a sheet of lightning. Uncounted tides were to rise and recede before I saw that burning, electric flash again, but the moon went with me in my wanderings, and in the watches of the night brought many a message from home and the land I was leaving behind.

III

BLUE WATER

Oh I am tired of brick and stone,
the heart of me is sick
For windy green, unquiet sea,
the realm of Moby Dick;
And I'll be going, going, from
the roaring of the wheels,
For a wind's in the heart of me,
a fire's in my heels.
—JOHN MASEFIELD

OUR ship's company was that of a typical tramp. There were thirty-two persons aboard: a captain, three mates, three engineers, a carpenter, a boatswain, a steward, a cook, a messroom steward, all living aft; and eight seamen, a donkeyman, two greasers, six firemen, two trimmers, and one stowaway, living forward. The stowaway, an uninvited but not wholly unexpected member of the ship's company, showed himself on deck as soon as we had left Sandy Hook and was sent below to work with the trimmers.

The seamen's forecastle was mainly British. Two were from Liverpool — White and Dougherty — one from Ireland, one from Wales, and one from the English interior. For a wonder there was only one Scandinavian, whom I have already introduced as Petersen, although at once we shortened this to Peter. Even more remarkable than only one Scandinavian was the presence in our forecastle of as many as two Americans, Mick and myself.

Of Dougherty and Mick I have already said a word. Of White I shall have much to say throughout. Fifty or more years of age, White was probably the oldest man in our forecastle and certainly the most feared, the most disliked, and to me easily the most interesting man aboard. He was of medium height, but heavily built — big legs, big arms, a big bull neck, and a gorgeous spread of chest. His bulk was not that of the city man riding around in an automobile — puffy shaking cheeks, a hanging dewlap, and a bulging paunch. Rather was White's weight kneaded and muscled into him, like that of an Italian ditch digger in the streets of New York. He walked, too, like such a one, with legs wide apart and an easy swing of the shoulders. His clean-shaven face was tanned a dark coffee color by many suns and scarred by almost as many fights. His eyes were a somber black, his expression grim, except when his face burned with anger or crinkled in laughter while spinning a yarn.

Moore, the native Irishman, I was never to know well. Diggle, from the British interior, and the Welshman were, with me, the juniors of the forecastle. Diggle, a thick-tongued, thicker-headed lout, had already been at sea for several years but had learned nothing and was destined to become the butt of his watch and of the forecastle. The Welsh sailor was a rosy-faced boy with a twinkling blue eye, a knowing smile, and a drawling, purring voice. Most of his sea service had been on English and American coasting vessels. I liked and trusted him at once. We called him Cardiff because that was the city from which he came. I never knew, or soon forgot, what his name was.

Cardiff was only one of many aboard with whose real name we never concerned ourselves. A man forward does not speak of the commander as "Captain Blowhard" or the mate as "Mister Doolittle". The captain is called the skipper or the "old man." The chief mate, the second mate, and the third mate are known respectively as the mate (the chief engineer is the "chief"), the second, and the third. Nobody ever heard of a cook or a steward called Jones or Brown. It is always Cook and Steward, just as it is Chips (the carpenter) or Sails (the sailmaker). In the forecastle it is common to give a man some descriptive title or call him by the place from which he hails. We had Cardiff, while among the firemen were Melbourne and Frisco. Besides Mick and I, Frisco was the only American aboard. I was known as Yank, a usual name for Americans on British vessels. It was White, as I remember, who baptized me. His authority made it official for the forecastle.

"I jest got some tobacco off the queer fella," said Mick to me one day. "Traded a shirt fer it."

"Who do you mean by the queer fellow?"

"Why, yuh know . . . the queer fella . . . the Welshman in the port watch."

"Sure, I know him, but why do you call him a queer fellow?" For Cardiff had struck me as about as open and normal a chap as we had aboard.

"Why," said Mick, "I call him the queer fella . . . yuh know . . . I forget his name."

And so I found it went in the forecastle. There is not necessarily anything odd about a "queer fellow" at sea. It is merely that you do not know his name or do not care to dignify him with one. On shipboard "the queer fellow" is the equivalent of "Whosis" or "Mister Whatshisname" ashore.

Just before we left New York Harbor the sailors were divided into watches. There was no formality about it as on sailing ships, where the first and second mates lined up the crew and picked their men one at a time by turns.

With us the mate came forward and pointed his finger around the group.

"You and you and you," indicating White, Cardiff, and Diggle, "will be in the port watch. You and you and you," singling out Dougherty, Mick, and Moore, "in the starboard. You two," picking Peter and me, "will be day men for the present. Port watch go below."

"T'at's all right," said Peter, grinning at me. "Day men iss all right. Ve'll haff all night in. T'at's all right, Yank."

Peter rolled the phrase "all night in" lovingly over his tongue. It is the rainbow's end for the average sailor — relief from the drudgery of turning out of a warm bunk at midnight to go on a deck awash with water in a bellowing gale or an eye-blinding snowstorm; surcease from the recurring anger of prying open heavy eyelids as you feel a rude grip on your shoulder and a relentless call shatters your ear at 3.45 A.M.: "On-n-ne bell! Tumble out, the watch!"

In the days of which I write the eight-hour workday was unknown at sea except in the engine room and stokehole. Seamen, if in watches, were on duty twelve hours in every twenty-four; day men worked ten hours out of the twenty-four.

So Peter, for whom "little one bell" had shattered many a dream, rolled lovingly over his tongue the words "all night in."

"T'at's all right, Yank. T'ey call us at half-pass fife for coffee, yaas. Ve turn to at six an' vork till eight. T'en ve haff breakfass vit' t'e vatch vat chust coam off t'e deck, an' go to vork again at nine, yaas. At noon ve hass hour for dinner, yaas; t'en ve vork till six o'clock an' t'en," Peter's eyes glowed with anticipation, "ve haff *all night in.*"

But I — I was disappointed. Not to be in a watch meant that I should not have my turn at the wheel and the lookout, and steering was one of the bits of seamanly work which I loved and believed I had learned to do well. Also, of all work aboard ship, the wheel and lookout bring one closest to the sea; they put one most magically under its spell. Especially is this true at night.

There has always been a fascination for me in night work. As a newspaper reporter I have enjoyed prowling through deserted streets to police stations and hospitals, watching the glare of midnight fires, hurrying to outlandish places to view the scene of a crime or accident by the ghostly light of swinging lanterns. I have enjoyed late lunches in all-night restaurants, home-going trips in owl cars, all the bizarre world which the night unrolls. A worker by day cannot get the feel and texture of that world by roistering around, heavy-eyed, until early morning hours. One must view it as part of one's work to realize the mystery and the poetry of the fact that

The Night has a thousand eyes,
The Day but one.

So, too, I love night work at sea. I love the middle, or churchyard, watch — from midnight to 4 A.M. It is the most profound, the most nightly part of the night; when darkness is upon the deep and "the Spirit of God" does miraculously move "upon the face of the waters", as Genesis tells us it did thousands of years ago. I love even the "gravy-eye wheel" — that generally most detested trick from 4 to 6 A.M., taking its name, I suppose, from the fact that at this time one's eyes are apt to be thick and sticky with sleep. It is said that more accidents from carelessness occur during those two hours than in any others. It sounds likely, but —

But he who has the "gravy-eye wheel" is on deck for the dawn! Awake and expectant, he watches the slow, brooding approach of the most subtle, most moving, most beautiful moment of the twenty-four hours, especially at sea. The actual rise of the sun at sea, as on land, is commonly an indifferent spectacle. The horizon is often obscured by nearby mist or distant cloud so that the sun does not break through until it is already well started into the heavens. And when the horizon is clear the leap of the sun into the sky is so sudden that form and color are both speedily lost in dazzling brilliance.

But the dawn is different. The dawn begins — when does it begin? That's part of the beauty of it; one never knows. One senses somewhere, somehow, an apparent lightening of the shadows, a hardly perceptible lifting of the night, as if in its languorous slumber it had taken one of those quick, long intakes of breath that so often presages waking. At sea there is no fluttering of birds, no stirring of animals to herald the approach of day. It comes silently — perhaps after several disappointed expectations. But it comes. And this moment when the rim of light on the horizon spreads up the sky and across the water is the most poignant, though the most elusive, of the twenty-four hours.

To me daybreak does not seem the right word, except perhaps in the tropics, where it does almost burst upon one. In the temperate zones the day hardly breaks. It flutters, it steals, it creeps. The poet who wrote of the light that never was on land or sea had not been enough at sea. He would have found it there — at dawn. And, as a poet, he would not have begrudged the clang of "little one bell", the conquest of a few seconds of gummy-eyed and slumberous rebellion, even the standing of a four-hour watch, to behold it.

It is worth while to *have* to get up to see the day dawn over this not so unbeautiful earth of ours. We are not so sure as were our fathers of rising to behold a more glorious dawn in a more perfect world.

Clin-n-g, clin-n-g! . . . Clin-n-g, clin-n-g! . . . Clin-n-g, clin-n-g! . . . Clin-n-g, clin-n-g!

Cardiff whaled the bell on the forecastle head with the vim of a young man announcing that his watch is over and he is ready for something to eat. The sound reverberated through the ship out over a smiling, sunlit sea, and as I approached from aft Cardiff hummed a bit of doggerel:

Oh, I took a kind of notion
Fer to cross the Western Ocean.

With a grin on his face and youth in his legs he did a few dance steps on the deck and then, blushing foolishly, disappeared into the forecastle, ashamed of having shown his pleasure in finding himself again at sea.

It was good to realize oneself on blue water that morning. The air smote one's nostrils fresh and clean. The *Lethington's* bow rose and fell slowly and rhythmically; to one's ears came a musically recurrent Sw-o-o-o-o-o-sh, splash! — Sw-o-o-o-o-sh, splash! One knew without looking over the bulwarks that we were sidling easily into a broad, low swell, our bow sighing in deep content as it sank into a hollow, only to blurt out an exclamation of peevish surprise when, rising in friendly anticipation toward a succeeding ridge, it received a smart smack on the cheek. The deck at last felt *right* under one's legs — no longer dead and stodgy as when at dock, but tingling with the twist and toss of the sea, vibrant with the pulse beating far down in the engine room.

Peter greeted me cheerily:

"Coam on, Yank, ve'll get t'e breakfass. Vat'll it be? Dry hash, I t'ink."

We shuffled aft from the forecastle across the iron plates of the forward deck, climbed the iron ladder amidships, and stood presently before the open door of the cook's galley.

"Goodt mornin', Cookie," said Peter amiably. (It is always good policy to be amiable toward the cook.) "Breakfass for t'e sailors' fo'c's'le."

"How many of yuh?" grunts Cookie, who finds it less important to be amiable toward the sailors.

"Fife."

A moment's wait. Then the cook passes out of the door a steaming, iron kettle — giving out a vagrant odor of some distant relative of coffee — and a tin dishpan, known at sea as a mess kid, containing a hash of boiled potatoes and salt meat.

"You bring t'e coffee, Yank," said Peter, hugging the mess kid to him, and we clumped back over the iron decks to the forecastle, where White, Cardiff, and Diggle had already opened the box of ship biscuit, or hard tack, and were getting out their dishes for breakfast. (Biscuit is the one food sent forward in quantity, to be kept in the forecastle until used up, as there is small danger that anybody will eat too many of these flinty jawbreakers.)

Peter and I set the mess kid and the coffee kettle on the floor near a porthole, and the group knelt down in a circle, each man helping himself, then sitting back on his locker to eat. We decided to give the table the go-by as it was too poorly lighted. The candle-lit tables of some modern restaurants would excite suspicion among sailors. One wants to see what one eats on shipboard.

It was our first day at sea and our first meal in ordered ship fashion. We had left the dock three days before, but the watches had not been set until the evening of the day previous. What with bottles of whisky which were brought surreptitiously aboard, and the still lingering effects of bad shore liquor, it had taken until this morning for many of the men to sober up enough to want food. Now at last all were clear-headed and appetites were keen.

"W'at sort o' gear have yuh got t' eat with, Yank?" boomed White, curious to see how a landlubber had equipped himself. Having been well advised, I had practically the regulation kit.

"Oh," I said, with the easy feeling of one who has guessed right and finds himself dressed like the others at a party, "I've got a good plate." I held out for inspection a deep one of white enamel of which I had no reason to be ashamed.

White fixed his eyes on it curiously a moment and then turned on me with an amused smile. "Oh, yuh mean a basin," he observed, with a touch of sarcasm.

A little of my easy feeling left me, but I hastened to save the situation by passing to another item.

"And I've a good drinking cup," holding up a pint receptacle, also of white enamel.

" 'E means a pannikin," said White, with a ribald guffaw that at once became infectious.

"An' this," said White, thinking he might as well teach me my a b c's at one sitting, "is a pot." He held up a two-quart tin cup of which fortunately I had no counterpart or surely I should have misnamed it.

My feeling of ease had now oozed away as completely as that of a man who has been asked to a little informal gathering of friends and arrives in a business suit only to find everybody else, including his host, in evening regalia. I refrained from displaying my knife, fork, and spoon, but wondered secretly what they might be called aboard ship.

The vocabulary of the sea is enormous and admits of no deviation. It includes not only hundreds of words for objects or actions which have no counterpart ashore but also different expressions for what is familiar to the landsman under another terminology. Sailors are a race by themselves, and just a bare working knowledge of their language involves the mastery of a vocabulary as large as that necessary for getting along in a foreign tongue.

"Yank," resumed White, when breakfast was over, "do yuh know 'ow t' clean yer eatin' gear?"

It was a rhetorical question which White did not wait for me to answer. Picking up the coffee kettle, he poured a little of the pale liquid into his basin, which he had already wiped practically clean with a wisp of oakum. He rinsed his knife, fork, and spoon in the basin and drained it into the empty mess kid. Then he polished all his utensils carefully with another bit of oakum and put them away.

"Yuh want al'ays t' keep yer gear clean at sea," he concluded sententiously, and reached for a plug of tobacco preparatory to whittling off a pipeful for a smoke. All the men in the forecastle, I found, smoked plug tobacco.

"Plug tobacco take oop little room, an' he keeps better," explained Peter. The forecastle looked with mild amusement upon the tins of cut tobacco that I had brought aboard, although nobody carried his disdain to the point of refusing a pipeful when I proffered it.

There was, I believe, an idea among some of my mates that I could be bamboozled into waiting on the forecastle. Perhaps I could have been if it had rested only with me, for I knew next to nothing of what the circumstances called for. But the alert Mick was looking out for me, as usual.

"Oh, no," he said decisively, when there seemed to be a movement to will upon me permanently the job of bringing the food to the forecastle and returning the empty mess kids to the cook's galley. "Oh, no; Yank is a passage man but he's signed as an A. B. jest the same's the rest of us. He takes his turn at the fo'c's'le work 'n' no more. See?"

"T'at's right," assented Peter, and thus it was settled.

The word "sailor" is used in two different senses among seafaring men. In a general way anybody is a sailor who follows the sea for a living, whether as captain, cook, fireman, or anything else. But on a steamship the term is used more specifically to designate the ordinary and able-bodied seamen in distinction from the black gang, or from the force of the steward's department. I was not, in fact, entitled to the rating of able-bodied seaman, but since I was a passage man and it didn't cost anything, the mate, in signing me on, had generously given me the best pedigree at his disposal.

The self-imposed discipline of the forecastle is as rigorous as that pressed upon it from above, and as Mick said to me in private later, "It's a good job fer you, Yank, that old Pontius Pilate," as we had nicknamed the mate, "put yuh on the articles as a A. B."

"Why?"

"Why, because the ordinary seamen aboard has to wait on the A. B.'s. 'N' the rest of us is all A. B.'s. See? So ef you hadda been a O. S., you woulda had tuh do all the food-fetchin' an' keep the fo'c's'le cleaned up besides."

IV

CARPENTER'S MATE

He filled the deck with rustic seats
And many a grapevine swing —
Yes, a handy man was Carpenter Dan,
For he thought of everything.
—WALLACE IRWIN

SOUTHEASTWARD toward the Cape Verde Islands, where we were to take bunkers for the long trip around the Cape of Good Hope to Australia, the *Lethington* pushed her snub nose slowly, lumberingly, almost protestingly. Almost protestingly, although there was nothing in God's blue world to protest against. At least, I could find nothing (thereby proving, I fear, that I was not yet a bona fide sailor).

About us a circle of sea rose and fell in a thousand undulations, as gentle as the bosom of a sleeping child, while good-natured waves slapped our hull scarcely harder than an energetic baby's palm. Above this circle of sea — now blue, now green, now lavender, now drab, now all of them together — roved quiet breezes. Above all a million stars blinked friendly recognition by night, while by day a blinding sun radiated light and heat. Yes, an uncomfortable amount of heat, as we edged farther south, for in spite of cooling breezes the unshaded iron decks (we had no awnings) of a hull with iron skin and iron bones became ungently torrid under the relentless eye of a tropic sun.

"You will work with the carpenter to-day and until further orders," said the mate to me one morning. "You can report to him at once."

Disappointed again! My regret at having been made a day man instead of assigned to a watch had been modified, at least, by satisfaction in the thought that I should have Peter as a working mate. I liked Peter — had liked him from the day I joined the *Lethington*. He was a typical Scandinavian — mild blue eyes, sandy hair and mustache, a gaunt face, and a sinewy body. In disposition, too, he had the typical Scandinavian genius for the sea — a quiet competence, unfailing trustworthiness, a docile temper that kept him from trouble either with the officers or his mates, and an incredible capacity for punishment, whether that of hard weather, hard work, hard words, or hard fare.

Peter, in short, was one who amply deserved that description reserved among seamen for the ablest members of their craft: every hair of his head was a rope yarn, every finger a marlinspike, and every drop of blood Stockholm tar.

As carpenter's mate I would work not with Peter but with Chips, of whom I knew nothing at the time except that he was a Scot and that he lived aft with the officers. (In point of fact the officers' quarters were amidships, but at sea everybody is said to live either "aft" or "forward" according to his job, no matter where, geographically speaking, he actually does live.)

"Weel," said Chips, whom I found contemplating a pile of heavy planking by the Number 3 hatch, "we micht as weel get these oop on the poop deck. The auld mon sayes I'm tae build him an ice hoose thur."

"An ice house?" I repeated in surprise. "That's an odd place for an ice house, perched on top of the poop deck." I was surprised at the thought of ice on a tramp steamship anyhow. "And where is he going to get his ice? We're headed right into the tropics, and after the Cape Verde Islands the next stop is Melbourne."

"It iss a quare place fur an ice hoose, an' whur the auld mon iss gaein' tae get his ice I dinna ken. But that's naethin' neither tae you nor me."

Chips toiled so prodigiously for the first day or so that I made up my mind that he was a gourmand for work and a disgraceful slave driver, but I noticed that instead of building all the skeleton work of the ice house first, leaving the body to be filled in later, he neglected all other construction to run up a single solid wall in front.

"Once we get this oop, Yank," he confided presently, "the auld mon canna see us from the bridge an' we can tak' the job a wee bit mair easy."

The performance was even better than the promise. As soon as we got the front wall raised, it served not only as a screen between us and the skipper's vision; it also afforded a grateful shade during a good part of the day.

"I reckon it's time fur a pipeful," said Chips, and he sat down behind his handiwork contentedly. He had several pipes full. In fact, smoking was about the hardest work that was done on the poop deck thereafter. I can shut my eyes and see Chips now, a tall, angular, thin-faced man with shrewd gray eyes and sun-tanned face, dressed in a neat suit of blue dungaree. He sat cross-legged, his back against the kindly wall, his pipe between his teeth, bestirring himself from time to time not to resume work but to peep around the edge of our parapet.

"I want tae be sure," he would observe at such moments, "that the auld mon iss no coomin' aft tae ha' a look."

The old man never did. If there was anybody doing less than Chips and I during those days it was the noble commander of our ship.

The question may be on the lips of some, Why should there be a carpenter in a ship almost every part of which, save a small amount of interior trimming, is of iron? The answer, gentle reader, is that the position of carpenter at sea was created generations ago when ships were still built of wood. And at sea what has once been decreed remains immutable. At least, it is so in British ships, and Britain, having the world's greatest fleet, not only rules the waves but also the decks — to a large extent even those of vessels over which her ensign does not fly.

And although the old work of the carpenter has practically disappeared in a modern iron-built tramp, new work has been assigned to him. He is responsible for the pumps, the winches, and a large amount of repair and construction work on deck. He must be a plumber, an iron worker, a steam fitter, an electrician, a tinsmith, and a bit of an all-around mechanic in about every field except that of straight carpentry.

The carpenter of the *Lethington* admitted to me that he had a grudge against the skipper. There had been some trouble before the ship reached New York, and Chips had determined to do as little as possible for the remainder of the voyage.

"The carpenter on the trip just afore iss always the best," he remarked enigmatically one morning, "but I tak' notice he never signs fur anither voyage." He added spitefully, "It's quite enough tae eat the bad grub the auld mon gies us, let alone doin' any war-rk. The war-rk in this hooker iss light, but the grub iss lighter." Chips paused and then added: "Except the bread, which iss maist almichty heavy."

Although we put up that first wall, possibly a sixth of the entire work, in a couple of days, the job progressed after that at the rate of about four planks a day. In fact, it lasted for four weeks, or until we reached the Cape of Good Hope. It would have lasted longer but bad weather set in then, making the wind-swept poop deck no longer a pleasant place on which to sit smoking the days away. I shame to recall how easily I fell in with the carpenter's idea that we were doing enough for the skipper merely in eating his poor food. A sailor is a man who will wear the skin off his palms when there is work that has to be done, but when it is merely a question of giving idle hands something to keep them busy, he can do more soldiering than any soldier ever born. I was learning to be a sailor.

Successfully, apparently, for "I reckon it's a tie," Chips remarked one day toward the end of our loaf, "which iss the laziest mon aboord this ship, you or me."

He forgot the skipper.

V

THE COOK WAS DUTCH

But the cook was Dutch and behaved as such;
For the food that he gave the crew
Was a number of tons of hot-cross buns
Chopped up with sugar and glue.
—CHARLES E. CARRYL

I HAVE said a word of the crew, but what of the ship we were aboard; what of the cumbrous mass of iron plates and bulkheads and beams which kept us off the bottom of the Atlantic Ocean the while it floated us slowly southeastward?

Were I a poet I should sing the song of the tramp steamship. I know hardly half a dozen such poems — and they are maledictions — while hundreds of verses have been written to the glory of the sailing ship. Yet homely and ungainly as the tramp undoubtedly is, it is the lineal descendent of the old-time foreign-going windjammer, the inheritor of its traditions and its trade. The hobo steamship has been the great cargo bearer of the twentieth century. Without it the international trade of to-day could hardly have been achieved. It has been the commercial scout of modern industrialism.

Assuredly the tramp steamship lacks the beauty of the sailing vessel, with its towering spars and billowing canvas, its graceful bowsprit and its finely turned stern. In appearance the tramp is a mongrel, its sides scarred and rusty, its decks stained by strange cargoes and blistered by tropical suns, its smokestack dingy with soot. With its blunt, ugly bow and stern, it is designed neither for comfort nor speed, but to carry the most cargo at the lowest cost. It is utility raised to the *n*th degree.

"She certainly is an ugly-lookin' hearse," Cardiff once said of the *Lethington*. "She must be one of those boats that is built by the mile an' sawed off in lengths to suit."

The average American conceives of ships solely in terms of the great passenger liners that form almost a moving sidewalk between the United States and Europe. Such vessels appeal to our imagination; they awe us with their enormous power and speed, their beauty in spite of their bulk, their marvellous equipment for safe and scientific navigation. Yet to the sailor of the Seven Seas they are an artificial product of a special environment. They move back and forth like trolley cars over a fixed route, carrying thousands of passengers and accepting vast responsibilities, but they are insignificant and inconsequential in the great job of world commerce and international trade. It is the carrying of cargo that makes ships and shipping. In the words of Kipling:

> The Liner she's a lady,
>   But if she wasn't made
> There still would be the cargo-boats
>   For 'ome and foreign trade.

And among cargo vessels not those with regular routes and fixed sailings but the free ocean rovers are the repositories of the old-time romance of the sea. In the crews of tramp steamships are to be found most of the few surviving shellbacks who learned their trade in sail. Nowadays there are few such left, but when I went for a sailor in the *Lethington* there were still many sailing-ship men afloat, although windjammers themselves were growing scarce. All of my mates, except juniors like Cardiff and Diggle, had spent years in sail. They cursed windjammers, yet they respected them as places where the sailor's trade was a skilled and noble one, whereas the forecastles of passenger liners they held in supreme contempt, knowing through experience or report that about all the sailorly work on such vessels — especially the great ships engaged in the transatlantic rush-hour service — was done by shore gangs in port.

As Mick presented it, "Why, Yank, aboard a mail boat," meaning a passenger liner, "a sailor is nothin' but a crucifyin' chambermaid. When I was in the *St. Louis* uh the American Line, runnin' between N' York 'n' Southampton, we did nothin' but polish brass, clean paint work, 'n' scrub decks afore the passengers was up in the mornin.' Scrubbin' decks, mind yuh, at three er four o'clock in th' mornin', when it was still pitch dark. At it fer a couple uh hours afore we had a drop uh coffee. 'N' after that, cleanin' damnation brass — miles of it — er washin' soot an' grease off acres uh white paint. Crucifyin' Pilate! Call *that* a sailor's life? . . . An yuh don't git no wheel er lookout neither in them Western Ocean mail boats — not without yuh gits tuh be a quartermaster.

"Now windjammers — course they're hard and hungry bitches. But I don't know; they're not so bad, Yank. 'N' a tramp, like this tub uh ours — well, it's sort uh between-like, sort uh between a mail boat 'n' a windjammer."

When do we eat?

On shipboard the classic question of the army is modified to, What do we eat? The times for eating proceed according to an immutable routine, the same for all ships flying the British flag, but the food itself varies. It has improved vastly in recent years, due to shorter voyages, the growing habit of carrying ice, and a general tendency toward a higher living standard. Not only on steamships carrying passengers but on many others the crews now get fresh meats and vegetables, condensed milk, butter, jams and preserved fruits, puddings and pastries — all practically unknown to the blue-water forecastles of twenty years ago.

"They say some whisky is better than some other but none is bad," Cardiff explained. "You might say of sailors' grub on any old windjammer or tramp that on some it's worse than on others but it ain't never better."

What was it, exactly? The regulations in regard to rations as laid down by His Majesty's Board of Trade were posted in the forecastle, as follows:

	Sun.	Mon.	Tues.	Wed.	Thur.	Fri.	Sat.
Water, quarts	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Bread, pounds	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Beef, pounds	1½	.	1½	.	1½	.	1½
Pork, pounds	.	1¼	.	1¼	.	1¼	.
Peas, pints	.	⅓	.	⅓	.	⅓	.
Flour, pounds	½	.	½	.	½	.	.
Rice, pounds	.	.	.	.	.	.	⅓
Coffee, ounces	½	½	½	½	½	½	½
Tea, ounces	⅛	⅛	⅛	⅛	⅛	⅛	⅛
Sugar, ounces	2	2	2	2	2	2	2

"That's our whack, Yank," said Cardiff, as one day after dinner he saw me studying the poster in the forecastle. "It's al'ays the same."

"Excep' on win'yammers you doan get no t'ree quarts uff water," observed Peter. "You gets only two."

"Includin' w'at's used fer cookin'," chimed in White. "A man does git thirsty too, sometimes," the old shellback continued reminiscently. "Slattin' around in the tropics

. . . waitin' fer a breeze . . . decks burnin' under 'is feet . . . eatin' salt 'orse. Yes, 'e does get thirsty. Yuh want t' sail in a windjammer, Yank,'' he concluded in a tone which said that he did not want to — any more.

''Now in a steamboat they don't gen'ally 'old yuh t' yer w'ack o' three quarts o' water,'' White resumed presently. ''Like in this wagon — we can 'ave w'at we wants within reason, though most likely we'll be drinkin' out o' the condensers soon.''

''The condensers?'' I repeated curiously.

''The machine down in the engine room fer makin' it out o' sea water,'' White explained.

''I neffer did like t'at stuff,'' said Peter. ''I t'ink it not taste goodt.''

''U-m-m, meybe not,'' responded White, ''but it's water, ain't it? It's water.''

Sailors are supposed to have a special weakness for strong drink, but sometimes they speak even more reverently of water.

Cardiff took up the conversation again.

''You understand, Yank, they don't usually hold you exactly to your whack. Like here we gets a few spuds an' turnips an' carrots while they last, an' less meat. But the skipper can put us on our pound and pint if he wants to.''

''Er we can claim it,'' cut in White, ''an' sometimes w'en I'm eatin' o' this scruff I thinks we had ought to.''

The bread provided for in the food regulations meant ship biscuit, or hard-tack; flour was furnished either as duff or as fresh bread. We got no duff (I had always supposed it to be as necessary to a ship as a rudder), but three times a week Cookie handed out at the galley door a small loaf of fresh bread — a cob we called it — for each man.

Under the articles breakfast might consist merely of coffee, supplemented with ship biscuit, of which there was a supply in the forecastle. It was usual, though, to supply dry hash every day except Saturday. Dry hash was chopped salt meat mixed with boiled potatoes. Why it was designated as "dry" I could never understand, as it was moistened with water like any hash ashore. For Saturday morning's breakfast the weekly ration of rice turned up as

Rice and curry
In a hurry.

Burgoo (oatmeal) was served now and then as a variation, with treacle (molasses) to go with it.

For dinner, at noon, we got soup, along with salt meat and potatoes (when there were any). Three times a week the soup was made out of our allowance of dried peas.

Pork and peas,
As much as you please,

the forecastle poesy had it. We were generally pleased not to have to eat much of the salt, fat, gristly pork that was passed out of Cookie's laboratory. On the three days when the soup was made of peas, it was good and nourishing; on the other days it was dishwater.

At supper time we received just tea — nothing more. As a rule, though, some if not most of the salt meat was left from dinner, and proved more palatable cold than hot.

Mick came off the bridge at noon, having finished a two-hour trick at the wheel, and ambled forward from amidships to the forecastle over a stretch of iron deck that radiated heat from a glaring sky overhead.

"Lime juice to-morrow," he announced. "We'll be in the tropics by mornin'."

Mick had overheard the officers talking, learning that we were expected to cross that theoretical line at 23½° N. known as the Tropic of Cancer some time during the night.

"Why do we have lime juice only in the tropics?" I asked of Mick.

"Oh, I dunno exactly. Some ses it keeps yuh from gittin' scurvy 'n' the likes uh that; some ses it keeps yer nature down. I dunno. American ships doesn't usually bother about it. But they hafta give it tuh yuh on British boats — Board uh Trade makes 'em. That's why we calls 'em lime juicers."

There was more and more complaint about the food as we pushed onward. For my part, I found it rather more palatable than I had expected, although it didn't compare in quantity, quality, or variety with that which I had had in New England fishing schooners. Perhaps I had painted too black a picture for myself in advance; perhaps it was merely that I was young and had a gorgeous appetite. Anyhow, there were no weevils in the sea biscuit — or at least only a few, and as these were too small to be readily seen they didn't matter.

But growling about his food is one of the few rights which a sailor enjoys. And he enjoys it to the full. Justifiably or not, the recriminations against our fare became louder and lustier.

"Now look at that junk," White stormed one noon. Kneeling beside a mess kid which as usual had been placed on the floor, he scrutinized the contents by the light of a porthole which at midday was sufficient to give considerable of an idea of what was before one. "That ain't beef; it's 'orse meat." He jabbed disdainfully at a piece with his sheath knife and glared at me as if I were responsible.

"I might not disbelief t'at," said Peter cautiously.

Diggle, who rarely had much to say and was not encouraged by his mates to unburden himself of that, giggled foolishly.

"Huh?" roared White, fixing him with steely eyes. "W'at's that yuh say? Yuh mind yer eye, young fella me lad, er yuh'll go t' looard."

Diggle had been cuffed around by White several times already, and desired even less than the rest of us to become a target for his spleen. Diggle subsided.

"That ain't beef; it's 'orse meat," White repeated. "Yuh can't tell me nothin' else. Look at the coarseness o' them strips," poking viciously with his sheath knife, "an' the shape o' them bones. We've got t' 'ave an inspector come aboard at Melbourne an' that's all there is about it."

White raised his eyes from the mess kid and looked hard at Diggle. This time Diggle did not laugh.

The usually docile and patient Peter seemed to be affected with White's mood.

"Look at t'ose spuds," he growled sullenly, pointing at the mess kid containing our allowance of potatoes, boiled in their jackets. "Half uff t'em iss rotten an' t'e rest iss hardt-boiled." He spiked one scornfully with his steel fork. "It's hardt as a whore's heart."

On the firemen's side complaints against the food were even more vehement than on ours, and one noon shortly before reaching the Cape Verde Islands the men from below decks refused to eat their dinner. They invited us to go aft with them in protest. White was on watch at the time and thus was unable to take the leading rôle which otherwise he would have assumed. Dougherty, Mick, and Moore were the watch below at the time. Dougherty and Mick were always ready for a scrap and Moore not unwilling.

Naturally I was all akindle for the adventure; to me it seemed almost as good as a mutiny — and less dangerous.

Picking up their untouched mess kids of salt meat and boiled potatoes, and taking along a loaf of bread, the procession thumped across the deck, up the ladder amidships, and aft to the captain's cabin, led by a big greaser. Don't get the idea that I'm speaking of a Mexican by a contemptuous nickname. In a British steamship a greaser is a man who oils and otherwise cares for the engines, under the supervision of the engineers. On an American vessel he is called an oiler. Along with the donkeyman, the greasers are the aristocrats of the black gang, and to have one as a leader lent dignity — of a sort — to our protest.

It was the cooking rather than the food itself around which criticism chiefly centered. The bread, of which we had received a ration that day, was especially offensive. It made us feel like John Masefield's sailor who shipped aboard

The Esmeralda, casual tramp,
from Hull towards the Hook
Wi' one o' the brand o' Cain for mate
'n' a human mistake for cook.

The steward met us outside the captain's door with an unwelcome air. There is rarely any love lost between crews and stewards. A crew looks upon a steward as a person who intentionally starves and flimflams it (as sometimes he does). A steward looks upon a crew as a gang of gutter rats before whom it is necessary to maintain his superiority by offensive manners.

"What duh *you* want?" asked the steward from the doorway, disdainfully.

"We wants to see the skipper," replied the big greaser gruffly.

"The captain can't be bothered now," retorted the steward airily. "He's eating his dinner."

"We cawn't eat ours. Bring the skipper aht er we'll bleedin' well walk in." The big greaser advanced menacingly.

The steward disappeared behind the door and presently the commander of the S. S. *Lethington* appeared there, a bearded and bulky man with a puffy, unhealthy-looking face and — for a sea captain — an indecisive manner.

"What do you men want?"

"It's the food, sir, we cawn't eat it," replied the greaser spokesman.

"It's not what we signed for, sir," added Dougherty, getting in a word for our forecastle.

"What's the matter with it?"

The big greaser handed the captain the mess kids for inspection.

"Oh-h-h," said the captain, glancing at the contents indifferently.

The greaser broke open the loaf of bread which he carried and shoved it under the captain's nose. "Look at that cob, sir."

"H-m-m," registered the skipper.

"Smell it, sir," continued the spokesman. "The engineers cawn't eat it, yer officers cawn't eat it, and we cawn't eat it."

The captain smelled the bread gingerly, turned it over, smelled it again, turned it over again, and indulged in a little further oh-ing and hem-ing.

"I'll speak to the cook," he said finally, turning his back on us without ceremony and retreating into the cabin.

"There's got to be an improvement er we'll take our pews," shouted the big greaser threateningly at the retreating back, "an' that's all there is abaht it."

And, substantially, that was all there *was* about it.

We had obtained nothing but a vague promise to "speak to" the cook, whereas what obviously was needed was that he be thrown overboard. Anyhow, the bread did improve, and we had had our growl. So thereafter all the food tasted better.

As we filed forward, I looked from our dingy decks to the peaceful but overwhelming expanse of sea about us, a swaying purple circle filled with green and white patches where waves broke, while above was the burning blue dome of a tropical noon.

In comparison with its stage setting the little drama we had enacted seemed trifling.

VI

Lounging Through the Tropics

Only a moment; a moment of strength, of romance, of glamour — of youth!

—Joseph Conrad

"By-y-y the deep, *nine*, sir! . . .

"Eight an-n-n' a *half*, sir! . . .

"Goin' *astern-n-n*, sir! . . .

"Eight an-n-n' a *half*, sir! . . ."

Dougherty was heaving the "blue pigeon." It takes some doing to cast a fourteen-pound weight by the side of a moving vessel, hauling in the slack cord so that the line shall be taut as the man casting it comes vertically over the lead and notes the depth. Hence the job had been assigned to Dougherty as the oldest and presumably the most skilled member of his watch. He did it with the zest and the not unobtrusive desire to show off characteristic of an old sailing-ship man assigned to a bit of seamanly work. Swinging the lead over his shoulder with a flourish, he called out the soundings in a raucous, vibrating drawl.

We were coming to anchor in the harbor of St. Vincent, Cape Verde Islands. Some parts of the islands are beautifully fertile and green, quite justifying their name, but the harbor of St. Vincent lies at the foot of a cluster of tawny mountains, barren and treeless except for some stunted scrub in the valleys. The little town twinkled before us, the red-tiled roofs and the white walls of the one and two-story houses sparkling under the brilliance of an insolent tropical sun. A Portuguese man-of-war and a score of other vessels lay about us in the harbor as our anchor chain was loosed and, with a roar and a cloud of rust, our mud hook went singing and crashing to bottom.

It was our fifteenth day out from New York and a Sunday morning. So we were free of work, but as our ship was to leave as soon as we had taken coal — presumably that afternoon — there was no shore liberty for any of the crew. Although we could not visit the islands, we were soon surrounded by rowboats, from which Negro natives shouted and gesticulated in an effort to sell us fruit and the usual knickknacks. They had their shouting for their pains, because the men of our crew had only half worked out their "dead horse" (the month's advance pay which had been assigned to New York boarding houses) and could get no money.

"I sailed into the ould man with ivvry kite drawin'," said Dougherty, coming forward dejectedly after a visit to the captain, "but he wouldn't give me a shillin'."

"Jest like the hard-shelled old barnacle," commented Mick contemptuously. "Tell yuh what, though," he added, brightening, "we might trade some biscuit fer some uh them oranges."

The idea seemed to be a happy one, as we had more hardtack than we could eat.

"But don't let the officers see yuh doin' it," White warned. "We could all be logged fer givin' away ship's food."

Surreptitiously, therefore, we lowered a box of ship biscuit over the side in return for one hundred and fifty oranges — which proved to be as sour as last year's vinegar.

From the Cape Verde Islands we lolled leisurely southeastward toward the equator — our speed was not much better than eight miles an hour — bound for the Cape of

Good Hope and Australia. Why did we not go by the Suez Canal and save time? I hear readers ask. Ah, to save time is not so important for a tramp steamship as to save money. Tolls through the Suez Canal cost money, besides which, although the distance saved is important in going to India or China, it is little or nothing when bound to a port, like Melbourne, on the southern coast of Australia.

These days during which the *Lethington* loafed lazily southward through tropic seas were the idyllic ones of the voyage. Overhead a cloudless azure canopy, burning and brazen. Around us a swinging circle of sea, never boisterous yet never quiescent, ever heaving, rolling, breaking, in an iridescence of sapphire, emerald, and pearl. Color set to motion! Motion imprisoned in color!

Now and then a swift, wicked gathering of black on the horizon, an onrush of murky, volatile clouds driven by a roaring wind. Wh-o-o-o-o-o-o! Wh-e-e-e-e-e-e! A sudden hissing as the furiously driven rain of a tropical squall hurls itself upon the sea immediately surrounding us, beating down the waves, tearing at their foamy crests, obliterating their color, leaving them rent, writhing, limp, lifeless, almost defeated as the skies above begin to clear again and the storm swirls away to leeward, a vaporous black wall.

No islands. No passing ships. Almost no life except an occasional band of porpoises or dolphins, darting with lightning rapidity from one side of the ship to the other, crossing and recrossing right under the bow; once a school of flying fish, several of them landing on deck; sometimes the white jet of a whale thrown against the sea in the distance.

Day after day of azure sky and frothy, cobalt sea. Nothing else on all this great expanse except our little speck of iron hull, rumbling down in its inwards as the engines and propeller shaft throb on and on and the furnaces throw from our funnel's mouth a spiral of soot, now rising in a thick, choking mass, now ascending thin and airy or floating seaward in a quavering, horizontal line.

Of course it was hot by day on our unshaded iron decks, but toward sunset it cooled off, and in the dogwatches we ate our supper and smoked our pipes in the open, sailors and firemen together. Ordinarily we sailors had little to do with the firemen, or they with us, although living just across a narrow alley from one another. They rarely entered our quarters and I don't recall going into theirs more than two or three times, then on special business. The sailors looked down on the black gang as interlopers in a realm where the men on deck were once the sole sovereigns. Probably the men below found an equal sense of superiority in the unconscious thought that they were the representatives of a new day at sea.

But here in the outdoors of the tropics we came together at nightfall to eat and smoke and yarn as the sun, turned from a blinding glare of fire into a disk of orange or scarlet, sank tired and spiritless through a bank of violet or purple or indigo, slashed with crimson and gold and a hundred other hues. I incline to the belief that the beauty of sunset in the tropics has been overrated. There are gorgeous masses of color, but it is all swiftly sudden, and one misses the subtler, tenderer hues of the long twilights of the temperate zones. To me also there is a somberness almost terrifying in the tropical sunset. I find no friendliness or benediction in it with which to end my day.

One evening as the sailors and firemen of the free watch were having supper together on deck we fell to discussing the respective merits of Yanks and British, a frequent topic of debate at sea, stimulated aboard the *Lethington* by the presence of Mick, Frisco, and myself. These debates usually brought forth little but exhibitions of national prejudice on both sides, and consisted mostly of wrangling and recrimination. But on this occasion Osborn, one of the greasers, spoke in a more philosophical vein.

"What's the use o' pretendin' ye all want tae cut each ither's throats?" he observed. "Here ye air, argyfyin' aboot which iss best, Yanks oar British, an' makin' yersel's believe ye want tae fight aboot it. An' yet all the time ye air sittin' roond dippin' oot o' the same mess kid an' fillin' yewr pipes wi' each ither's tobacco."

Osborn was a strapping big Scot, past his fiftieth year, it seemed to me, and yet tougher and healthier in appearance than a majority of those aboard. He had a strong, finely featured face set off with a wide black mustache and a mop of dark hair hardly at all grizzled in spite of his years. He was a typical soldier of fortune, but he never revealed more than odd scraps of a life that had included service in the British army and navy as well as merchant marine.

"I al'ays notice," Osborn continued, "that when sailors oft a Yank an' a British man-o'-war goes ashore an' gets drunk in the same poort, they starts a fight as soon as ever they meets. But let a gang o' Dagos, oar Mexicans, oar Chileans, oar somethin' come alang, an' the Yanks an' British quits fightin' each ither, turns to together, an' gies the yellow bellies a gude hidin'."

We smoked on in silence for a moment as the night gathered and a mild, playful breeze cooled and soothed us. Some were sitting on a hatch coaming, some were perched on the covering of a pipe, others were squatted cross-legged on the deck itself. The firemen wore blue dungaree trousers, a loose woolen shirt (a better protection than cotton in the stokehole), and a sweat rag knotted lightly about the neck. The sailors were dressed similarly, save that their shirts were of cotton and instead of a sweat rag about the neck they wore a sheath knife at the belt. A sweat rag is a piece of cloth of knitted cotton mesh, used alternately for wiping the grime off one's hands and the perspiration off one's brow, with somewhat disastrous effect to one's comeliness. It is as much a symbol of the black gang as a sheath knife is of the fraternity of the men on deck.

Presently White, stretched out flat on his back, broke the silence.

"My, 'ow the time does fly!" he mused. "It'll be a year afore we git 'ome. . . . Out o' the world, away from everythin' all that time. . . . That's the way I've been livin' ever since I was born."

Nobody said anything, and White went on, "Still this is a better life than bein' drunk ashore — rotten drunk. . . . Good air . . . good work." He didn't add, "Good food." "I'm al'ays drunk w'en I'm ashore. . . . Unless I'm broke — an' that's worse."

"So'm I," interjected a fireman dismally.

"We all iss," said Osborn stoically, with a comprehensive glance around the circle.

"Nobody's any use fer the drunken man," resumed White. "They take 'is money w'en they can git it, an' laugh at 'im behint 'is back fer givin' it to 'em. When I'm at 'ome I'm al'ays drunk, an' I spends my money free on everybody. They takes the money, but they got no use fer me. I goes down the street an' I sees some wimmin on the corner. 'Come in an' 'ave a drink,' sayes I. 'Right 'o!' they sayes. I mugs 'em an' goes on. A few minutes after another chap comes along 'oo just nods an' passes. They looks after 'im an' sayes, 'There goes a fine, steady man. 'E knows 'ow t' 'old on t' 'is shillin's.' Then they looks at me again. 'Isn't that the bloody fool?' they sayes. 'God pity the woman that gits 'im.' "

Some of the faces in the group smiled grimly at the parable, but nobody said anything. Your sailor has no illusions about drink. He knows and admits what it does to him. It is that knowledge in countless instances which keeps him at sea. There is an injustice in the easy supposition that, after a spree ashore, a sailor returns to salt water because his money is spent and he has no other chance of a livelihood. There is commonly more to it than that. Consciously or unconsciously, it is often to retain his self-respect, to preserve his manhood, that a sailor goes back again and again to the hardships of the forecastle. Too weak to master his urge toward drink when ashore, he is strong enough not to stay there and let it master him.

"I could do with a good mug of ale right now," remarked a fireman, trying to give the conversation a facetious turn.

"Ye could do withoot it too, mate," replied Osborn promptly, "an' ye wull."

In this Osborn spoke only the most prosaic truth. Prohibition is a fact in the forecastle on any long voyage even if nowhere else in the world. There is often — indeed usually — liquor among the officers, but the members of the crew have neither the money nor the foresight for such stocks, and even where a bottle or so is smuggled aboard it is gone in a couple of days.

White saw that the group was a little shamed and much interested in response to his frank confessions in regard to drink. So he sat up, whittled off a pipeful from a plug of tobacco, crunched it affectionately between his palms, and, after filling and lighting his corncob, proceeded.

"If a man could only see 'iself jest once w'en 'e was full o' booze 'e'd knock it off. W'y, I was goin' down the street one day, all dressed up nice with some friends. A woman an' a little gal I'd never seed afore passes us. The walk was chock-a-block with people, an' afore 'em all the little gal points 'er finger at me an' 'ollers out t' 'er mother, 'Look, Ma! There goes the drunken man w'at threw up all over our front hall.' Wasn't that awful now?"

White paused for the laughter to subside and then continued, "W'y, I 'ad a mate once in a four-masted bark out o' Sunderland — a 'ungry 'earse that ship was too. We was layin' in Calcutta Harbor, all o' us drunk t' our 'atches. My mate sayes, 'Come on in fer a swim,' 'e sayes. I sayes, 'Don't be a bloody fool. You're too waterlogged t' swim,' I sayes, 'an' any'ow,' I sayes, 'this place ain't fit fer an old sow t' go swimmin' in, it ain't.' 'Well, I'm goin' in, any'ow,' 'e sayes. 'Well, then, go in, an' go t' hell,' I sayes. In 'e jumps off the poop, the bloody fool, with all 'is cloze on, an' goes swimmin' around among the rats. An' then 'e begins t' 'oller, 'I'm goin' down.' An' there we stands, all of us too drunk t' do nothin', even throw 'im a life buoy.

"W'en we gits back 'ome, me an' another mate goes t' tell the widow about it. Well, w'en she sees us come in the room she guesses w'at it's about an' lets out a scream like she was murdered. We didn't wait fer nothin' more. We picks up our 'ats an' we're runnin' yet."

Cla-n-n-g!

One bell echoes noisily from the forecastle head. It is quarter to eight. One by one the men in the group get to their feet, stretch, put away their pipes, and prepare to relieve the watch when the hour sounds. All except Peter and me. As day men we are free until morning. So we sit on, breathing in the softness and splendor of a perfect tropical night. In front of us the forecastle head looms like a dark wall, now lifting slowly into a translucent sky so as to shut off a great sector of it, now slipping gently into a valley, down, down until we can see the watery path in front silvered by a resplendent moon. Behind us the bridge rises like a shadowy mountain. All is silent save a low, rhythmic r-r-ub, r-r-ub, r-r-ub far down in the ship as the engines drive the propeller shaft round and round. Peter and I do not break the silence with many words. We prefer to drink in the soft warmth of the air through the pores of our skin, to listen to the night with ears that hear even its silences.

On moonlight nights, like this one, the sky at sea is a gorgeous, illuminated dome, sweeping from Pole to Pole, from horizon to horizon, with only the stars of highest candle power blinking wanly in the brilliance. On nights when there is no moon, and the atmosphere is clear, the sky hangs thick and low and black, spangled with a maze of sparkling suns, seemingly so close that one could reach up with his hand and gather a cluster.

Ashore the tropics have a certain terror for me. The abundance of life — and death. The fecundity. The waste. The poison-laden insects and reptiles and plants. The dark jungles and swamps, rank with vegetation, oozing with rot, steaming with heat and moisture. The air, carrying miasma and disease in its seemingly innocent arms.

But at sea the burning, thirsty heat of the Sahara, the stifling, oppressive moisture of the Amazon are refined and purified. And at night! At night a magic steals into the air of the tropics at sea, making it warming and cooling, languorous and invigorating, at the same time. In its tender playfulness it is like the embrace of a much-loved and much-loving woman.

From where do such airs come as fluttered about our faces and rippled caressingly over our bodies as we squatted silently, Peter and I, on the deck of the *Lethington* that night? From the forests of the Congo? From the coffee plantations of Brazil? They seem to bear, these night breezes of the tropics in mid-ocean, the fragrance of faraway orange groves and spice fields, invigorated by the salt spray of the long, long sea over which they have passed.

Tin-n-g, tin-n-g! . . . Tin-n-g, tin-n-g!

Peter and I straighten up with a start. It is ten o'clock. Cardiff, on lookout on the forecastle head, assures himself first that the white light at the bow is burning. Next he walks to the starboard edge of the bow and looks back at the dull green glow of the sidelight. Then he strides to port and with a swift backward glance assures himself that the cheerful red eye on that side is still blinking.

"Lights are burning bri-i-ght, sir!" he calls lustily toward the bridge.

There is a muffled response out of the swaying, mysterious mass behind us.

"Vell, it's time to turn in," says Peter drowsily, moving forward to the forecastle. I go in with him but only to get the coverings from my bunk. I cannot bear to spend any part of a so precious night inside, deciding to stretch out on the Number 1 hatch instead. I address Peter softly just outside the alley to the forecastle. (One does not talk inside when men are sleeping.)

"A sailor's life isn't so bad when it's like this, is it?"

"Vell, no," replies Peter. "It issn't so badt neither." He pauses and I note his gnarled hands, his gaunt, hardship-eaten face, the symbol of what the sea has been exacting of men for ages. "It issn't so badt like t'is, Yank. But . . . vell . . . you haff few days like t'is, yaas . . . few veeks. . . . But mos' my life, it seems to me, I spen' it beatin' roun' t'e bloody Horn. . . . Goodt night."

I awoke in the middle of the night with the feeling of something moving on my face. Blinking my eyes open, I saw Mick beside me.

"I didn't go tuh wake yuh," he said apologetically. "The moon was shinin' right on yuh, so I was coverin' yer head up. Yuh might git moon blindness, yuh know."

"Moon blindness?" I asked sleepily. "Do you believe in moon blindness?"

"Why, sure. Yuh oughtn't never to let the moon shine on yuh that way when yer asleep. At least, they say it makes yuh so yuh can't see at night, 'n' some ses it makes yuh silly-like."

An old belief — as ancient at least as the story of Endymion — still generally accepted among sailors and, I think, a good many rustics ashore. Scientists pooh-pooh the notion and I was completely skeptical in regard to it at the time, sleeping often in the moonlight asea and ashore in the months to come. But —

For a number of years after I came home I found it hard to see when outdoors at night. I was bothered with a kind of nearsightedness, an inability, for instance, to recognize as well as other people could objects on a road ahead, thus making driving difficult if not dangerous. At the same time my vision was normal by day. And —

There are some odd and unexplained relations between the moon and us humans. Scientists, as I say, declare moon blindness to be sheer hocus-pocus. But maybe . . .

At the Cape Verde Islands we had filled not only our bunkers but had heaped the main deck, both forward and aft, with towering piles of coal. (Coals, we said aboard the *Lethington*, British fashion, just as we spoke of cleaning a deck with sands, not sand.) We had at least two months steaming to do between St. Vincent and Australia, with nobody knew what contingencies to increase the time. It was necessary to climb over a peak of coal in going from the forecastle to the bridge or the cook's galley, while there was another pinnacle to be surmounted in getting aft to the poop deck or the lazarette hold (pronounced "lazareet"), where the ship's stores were kept. The ideal place in which to live, I have been told, is one that combines the scenery of mountains and sea. The *Lethington*, then, must have been an ideal home, for the sea was just outside her bulwarks and mountains rose from her decks.

Beautiful it may have been, but it was the deuce on shoes. My previous sea experiences had been on wooden decks where most any kind of a shoe, or none at all, was sufficient. The rather light soles of my one pair of shoes crumpled and went to pieces scuffling across iron decks and mountaineering over the slopes and crests of our coal supply. Fortunately, I had more shirts than I needed (that is, more than two), so I traded a couple for some heavy-soled, hob-nailed brogans and a pair of dungaree trousers. Dungaree is a blue cotton, stout but easily washed and hence largely worn at sea either by itself or as an overall, according to the weather.

Some other discrepancies in my outfit were not so easily remedied. For instance, I discovered soon after leaving

New York that the brand-new and all-important oilskins and sou'wester with which I had come aboard had disappeared. So had my razor and comb. Sailors do not usually steal from one another. It would be considered wretched bad form to lock up one's personal effects — besides which it is impracticable — so that the forecastle has a rigid code of honesty based on substantial self-interest. As a landlubber, however, I was apparently regarded as fair prey. I am glad to say that whoever took the razor and comb had a twinge of conscience just before we reached Australia and returned those articles. The oilskins I did not need in the tropics, where an occasional brief drenching was of no consequence, but I missed them sadly when we reached the dirty weather beyond the Cape of Good Hope.

Sunday is washday aboard ship. On the first Sunday morning that I appeared on deck with a bucket of water, a cake of soap, and a roll of laundry I drew a small but not admiring gallery. I thought myself a fairly good washerman. Not so the spectators; sailors exact a high standard in washing, one at which not even the most meticulous housewife need turn up her nose.

"Yuh don't know 'ow t' wash cloze, Yank," said White superciliously, and turned away. Cardiff quoted an old sea rhyme:

First the sleeves
And then the breast;
Hang and beggar
All the rest.

He followed it with some more practical hints which I thought good and endeavored to carry out. I say I thought them good, because I did not always feel that way about methods aboard ship — and do not to-day. I learned with mingled irritation and amusement that there was just one way to do a job at sea; that no British sailor with any self-respect would consider any change in the methods laid down by Noah and Nelson. "This is the way to do it" or "That's not the way to do it" is all that I ever heard; there could be no two ways. Some time or another progress must have been permissible, but it was not regarded as desirable, or possible, when I went to sea.

VII

MAN OVERBOARD!

'Ow would you like to see a shipmate drown
Under goose'd tops'ls in the Easting down?
To 'ear 'im 'oller, " 'Elp me! 'elp me! — Gord!"
'Ow would you like that, eh? Man overboard!
—BILL ADAMS

"*Man-n overboard! Man-n overboard!*"

A hoarse and terror-laden voice rang in my ears as I mounted the last step of the ladder to the topmost or boat deck amidships. A second later the stowaway, who was up there to help hoist the ashes from the stokehole and empty them through the chute, burst upon me. Always a weird sight, dressed as he was in clothing much too large, given him by the firemen and never once properly washed since he came aboard, the stowaway now looked more repelling than ever, fear flowing in his eyes, panic transfixed upon his grimy countenance.

"*Man-n overboard! Man-n overboard!*" he barked helplessly in my face.

It was just before the breakfast hour and we two were the only persons on the upper deck except Mick, who was at the wheel on the bridge just forward but hidden from our sight. I was more helpless than the stowaway and stood, in the proverbial fashion, glued in my place, so numbed by the frantic call and the sudden appearance of the disheveled figure and fright-stricken face that I could not even take up the cry of "Man overboard."

The mate, who was the officer of the watch at the time and should have been on the bridge, was not there, but the captain came bounding up the ladder half-dressed, dashed to the telegraph behind the wheel, and signalled the engine room to stop.

"Har-rd a-starboard!" roared the captain. "Har-rd over the wheel!"

"It is hard over, sir," replied Mick, who with the splendid presence of mind characteristic of his race in emergencies, had known what to do and done it without waiting for the all-too-tardy orders. His self-possession extended even to remembering the "sir" in answering the captain.

The *Lethington* was already swinging lumberingly around, but as the engine-room force had not been expecting a signal out there in the wide Atlantic, no one was standing by and we could hear the machinery grinding on for what seemed interminable seconds before the propellor finally stopped.

"Who's overboard? Where did he fall?" asked the captain, turning on the stowaway and me.

"He f-fell off . . . the outside of th' . . . b-boat there," stammered the stowaway. "One of the sailors."

"It was Moore," I said. "He was washing the boat."

I realized all too well what had happened, for I had been working with him, cleaning off the soot and grime in preparation for a fresh coat of paint. A minute before I had been with Moore, standing on the edge of the deck, holding to the outside gunwale of the boat with one hand while washing and wiping with the other. I had gone below for a bucket of fresh water. The ship had given a lurch; Moore was astern of us in mid-Atlantic.

Soon half of the crew had joined the group, and the sailors seemed to know better what to do than the officers.

"Did any o' yuh throw 'im a life belt?" asked White.

None had. Neither the stowaway nor I had thought of it. It wouldn't have done any good if we had, for the nearest life buoy was on the bridge, lashed with a dozen turns of stout line. The carpenter, who was on the poop deck at the time, might have tossed out a life buoy had there been one there to toss. There ought to have been; but there wasn't; and he didn't.

"Shall we lower a boat, sir?" asked Dougherty, and without waiting for an affirmative from the mate, who had now reached the scene, we all scurried aft to launch the only boat that could be freed in anything like prompt time.

"Somebody go t' the mast 'ead an' keep an eye on the spot w'ere 'e went down," warned White. "Don't let 'im git out o' sight."

Cardiff ran for the ratlines of the mainmast and scrambled to the top. But there was a considerable chop to the sea and a light mist over the surface, through which the rays of the newly risen sun penetrated only in blurred and feeble fashion.

"I don't see him," Cardiff called down presently from the masthead.

"That be blowed fer a tale," White roared back. "Keep yer eye peeled, young fella, an' keep it pasted on the spot w'ere 'e went down till 'ell freezes over." But to the rest of us he added more soberly, "We must 'ave come more 'n' 'alf a bloomin' mile since the poor cuss took 'is dive, an' with this 'ere mist yuh can't see that far no'ow."

As we hauled mightily at the davits and swung the boat outward, Dougherty called out, "Where's the tiller?" And then, "There ain't no oarlocks."

"W'ere's the oarlocks, Bo's'n?" shouted White.

The boatswain looked at the mate and the mate at the boatswain.

"They must be in the carpenter's locker," concluded Bose finally.

"Hell an' damnation," said Dougherty in disgust. The carpenter's locker was way forward beside the forecastle.

Chips started for it on the run, most of the rest of us trailing after. As we hurdled the coal pile on the forward deck and came abreast of the carpenter's locker, Chips remembered something.

"I ha' no the key," he said shortly, and another delay ensued while he returned to his cabin amidships to fetch it.

It didn't matter especially. By that time we had lost track of the vicinity where Moore went down. Cardiff at the masthead could see only a small circle of gray-green sea, breaking in a monotonous, petty chop, and beyond it a baffling drift of mist. It was useless to send the boat out. For a few hours the ship lay to, moving about in a search we all felt to be vain. Then there was a sound from the bridge which I think we welcomed, though we didn't say so. Zi-n-n-g! Zi-n-n-g! buzzed the telegraph.

Full speed ahead! The *Lethington* and the living went on to the antipodes; an Irish sailor was left behind to find his way somehow to Fiddlers' Green,

> Where the Trades and the tides roll over him
> And the great ships go by.

On passenger vessels such things are managed better. They have to be. On tramps there is nobody whose loss matters. It is usually only a "common sailor."

Over our supper kids in the second dogwatch that night the single feeble slush lamp of the forecastle seemed to flicker more than usual, throwing ghostly shadows about the dingy, barren room that added to our eerie feeling of depression. We caught ourselves glancing stealthily at the emptiness of Moore's bunk, as if expecting him to appear out of the gloom.

"Will they do anything to the mate?" I asked presently.

"No bloody fear," answered White, savagely spiking a cold spud left from dinner time. "W'y should they?"

"It's against the law, isn't it, for an officer to be off the bridge during his watch? They could take his certificate away."

"Nobody'll ever know about it, my son," replied White, "an' w'y should they? The old man don't stand no watch an' they's only three mates. Pontius Pilate 'as got to stand 'is watch an' look after the blinkin' ship's work besides, ain't 'e? 'Ow can 'e do it without 'e leaves the bridge?"

All too true, as I was to learn, not only of the *Lethington* but of most ships of her class. And whenever his watch fell in the morning hours, Pontius Pilate continued to leave the bridge for long spells to lay out or superintend the work aboard, even though in all probability we had lost a life in consequence of such custom.

"Poor cuss," mused Cardiff slowly. "With those heavy boots on, most like he went down at once."

"'Ere's 'opin' 'e did," answered White. "It'd be crule t' be fightin' out there fer life, seein' all the time the big bastard of a ship an' then comin' t' know that nobody aboard could see yuh. Huh?"

"Or else — maybe a shark got him," ventured Diggle, uncomfortably.

"Stinkin' 'orse meat, I calls it," growled White, as he chased an elusive piece of gristle around the mess kid with his sheath knife. He raised his eyes and fixed them on the empty bunk. "Anyway, 'e knows the Great Secret now."

Then we changed the subject.

VIII

RUNNING THE EASTING DOWN

Then let our bark the ocean roam,
Our keel the billows plough,
I shed no tears at quitting home,
Nor will I shed them now!
—ADAM LINDSAY GORDON

THE Cape of Storms!

We were there at last, off that mountainous southern terminus of a continent of mystery that, with quickened imagination, I had looked at so long and often as a boy, outlined in the school geographies in yellow or pink or green — that point of interrogation around which Vasco da Gama had courageously felt his way five hundred years before, sailing boldly on into the then unknown waters of the Indian Ocean toward the magnetic wealth of Ophir.

And was this sailors' Cape of Storms — this school geographies' Cape of Good Hope — yellow or pink or green, as it used to be on those well-remembered maps? Scarcely. From where we were, perhaps twenty miles away, it was a smudge of cobalt blue on the horizon of a sky of the delicate hues of a robin's egg. I was not disappointed, although the sight shook a little rudely my faith in those glorious school geographies that I had so worshipped as a boy. I never could understand the distaste of some of my schoolmates for those maps. I used to pore over them by the hour — and love to to-day — painting mind pictures as I studied their details. In stout ships I doubled all the wave-beaten capes, I explored dark jungles on the way to the sources of great rivers, my breath came harder as I climbed the feathery marks that stood for mountains, my throat grew parched as I crossed by caravan the thumb prints which denoted deserts. They used to laugh at me because, looking up from a map, I would gravely announce my belief that Ascension Island, or the Republic of Uruguay, would be a wonderful place to visit.

"Why?" some one would want to know.

"Because it is such a lovely color. I like its looks on the map."

And was it stormy, this Cape of Storms? Not that anybody was able to observe. For some days previous the skies had been overcast, the winds chill, the seas tumultuous. But here at the foot of Africa the sun sparkled gaily and the breeze was as tenderly warm as that of a first fine day of spring. The sea was the most placid we rode during the entire journey to Australia — not a whitecap anywhere.

"I nivver see sich a day off this Cape," said Dougherty. "No, I nivver did. It's loike a mill pond, eh?" he concluded, resorting to a landsman's simile which he, as a sailor, should have known the deep sea never fulfills.

"No," I answered, as I observed the resistless, omnipresent heave under the flaccid surface, "it reminds me of the cream on the pans of milk which I used to carry across our kitchen at home."

On this quiet surface, with the tablelands of Africa bluely but barely visible to the north, we stopped and drifted for a few hours.

"It's tuh give the engineers a chanst tuh look over the machinery-like, afore we begins runnin' the eastin' down," Mick said to me, as the two of us idled a moment, leaning upon the bulwarks. "It'll be a hard old grind from here to Melbourne, 'n' no place to put in fer repairs, ef anythin' begins tuh bump. There's old Pontius Pilate 'n' the second on the bridge, testin' the compass tuh fin' out if it's gone pie-eyed sence we left New York. We're gonna have some weather from now on, yuh c'n take it from me."

Such a gathering of birds! I think I've never seen so multitudinous and animated a convention. As we lay quietly rocking on the muted ocean, they fluttered and flitted around us on the wing, or settled and swam about on the glassy water.

"Mollyhawks er boobies, we calls 'em," explained Mick, of the larger of the birds.

"And those littler fellows?" I asked, pointing to some birds beautifully mottled in black and white.

"Oh, them? I al'ays hears them called Cape pigeons, but I don't rightly know ef that's their proper name."

That was our one and only day of spring. As evening came on, the *Lethington's* propellor again churning and her bow headed eastward, a damp and chill crept into the air, prophetic of worse that was to come. So after supper in the second dogwatch (six to eight o'clock) there was a great overhauling of dunnage to get out warmer clothing. The starboard watch was below at the time. (A watch is said to be below whenever it is off duty, even if, as with us, the crew's quarters are on the main deck.)

Dougherty, Peter, and Mick rummaged through their belongings. The sailor's chest, once an institution inseparable from any seafaring man, had pretty much passed into history even at the time when I shipped in the *Lethington.* There was only one chest in our forecastle. It belonged to Dougherty, who next to White was the most ancient mariner among us. The other sailors carried their belongings in white canvas bags, or sacks, keeping their clothes mostly in their bunks, except oilskins, which were hung up, and sea boots, which when one turned in were kicked off beside the locker.

It is a pity, this disappearance of the sailor's chest, probably in consequence of shorter voyages and the more casual connection of the modern sailor with his ship. Some of the old-time chests were works of art — at least of craftsmanship — made of cedar or other fine wood, painted and ornamented in leisure hours below, equipped with rope shackles for handles and other fancy knots and tieings.

"How's that for a singlet, me sons?" gloated Dougherty, as he held up a heavy wool undershirt retrieved from the bottom of his chest. "An' there's socks an' mitts to match it," he added, displaying further wealth. "The ould man's not goin' to freeze this voyage; not unless we bump into the South Pole."

Ashore a man may be known by the company he keeps, but at sea he is known by the dunnage he keeps. The sensible and experienced sailor does not put to sea without clothing suitable for all climates and conditions. He does not depend upon supplies on credit from the ship's slop chest, which often is nonexistent, usually is unsatisfactory, and always is dear. Nor does he expect charity donations from his mates or any exemptions from duty because of poor equipment.

"There's no hooligan or no pierhead jump about me," continued Dougherty, holding up a heavy sweater for inspection. "I loikes me drink as well as any man, but whin me money's gone, I quits. I don't go on an' sell me cloze for more. An' I sticks by me ship till pay day. Whin I was a young lad, I used to run away in ivvry port, lavin' me money an' me cloze behint, loike the rest av yez. But now I sticks by the ship as long as ivver it sticks by me." He tucked the sweater under his mattress and concluded with emphasis, "That's the kind av bald-headed rooster I am."

"So roll on time, coam along pay day," put in Peter, quoting a popular bit of sea philosophy.

He and Mick were not badly off for clothes, but less well fixed than Dougherty. Hence they made no parade of their outfits. In fact, they looked a little envious as Dougherty displayed his wealth of soap, matches, and tobacco. These are a sailor's luxuries, and more highly regarded, therefore, than necessities like rubber boots and oilskins. With the exception of competence in his work and heft in the fists with which to knock his mates galley-west, there is no way in which a sailor can gain greater prestige aboard ship than by a wealth of soap, matches, and tobacco. That soap should be so highly prized may seem odd to the landsman, but it means the difference between clean clothing and that which is never or only half washed. And the sailor, with all his faults, is a convert to the benefits of cleanliness.

My own dunnage, although slighter than that of any of the other men, would have been sufficient for the passage to Australia had it not been for the loss of my oilskins, alluded to in a previous chapter. With the rigors of running the easting down finally at hand, this was a loss amounting for me almost to a calamity. Fortunately Mick's friendship served to mitigate my plight.

"Here, I've got a spare oil jacket," he said, as he made an inventory of his bag. "Take this; I'm sorry I ain't got no extra pants."

"Thanks," I rejoined, "with my rubber boots, this will be good enough."

It was not precisely a water-tight combination, but at least it kept me partially dry even in the worst weather.

There are two passages hated beyond all others by merchant seamen. One of them is rounding the Horn; the other is that long, dreary pathway from the Cape of Good Hope to Australia, which sailors describe as "running the easting down." For some reason the Horn has been held up to landsmen as typifying all that is most dangerous and disagreeable in seafaring life, but aboard the *Lethington* I learned that in the opinion of sailors it was a toss-up which was the worse, South America's frost-bitten toe or running the easting down. We fell to talking of it in the forecastle that night after leaving the Cape of Good Hope.

"They's both crule passages," said Dougherty meditatively. "I've spint some tough days in windjammers south of the Horn, wid head winds blowin' billy-be-damned an' me hangin' on by me belly to a tops'l yard, tryin' to fight in a sail that's freezin to itself an' me han's an' slattin' me around from hell to breakfast time so I loike to wint overboard at ivvry roll. Yez have to go down into fifty-five south to weather old Cape Stiff, but yez run the eastin' down in about forty."

"Not with a carryin'-on skipper in a windjammer, yuh don't," cut in Mick. "They's lots uh skippers that dips down tuh fifty tuh git the stronger winds."

"In a stameboat I'd choose the Horn, yis," resumed Dougherty. "It's only a dive to the s'uth'ard; a few days an' it's all over. But we'll bay lucky, me sons, if we're not over a month runnin' the eastin' down in a hearse loike this wan, that we will."

"Yaas," said Peter, as he slipped his legs into a pair of rubber boots, to see if they were big enough, "ve'll haff a mont' uff rain an' snow an' coldt, an' t'e decks runnin' vit' vater half t'e time. Yaas, ve haff six t'ousandt mile to go. A mont', yaas; in a vin'yammer it vould be six or eight veeks." He kicked off a boot savagely. "Damn t'at boarding-house t'ief. I tell him giff me boots enough big. My foot not go in vit' two pair socks."

"Most likely he didn't know yuh had two pair uh socks," guessed Mick.

"Try two boots for one leg," I suggested.

"Nivver moind, Mate," said Dougherty. "They're prob'ly rotten an' will bay as full av holes as a hatch gratin' a fortnight from now. Thin they'll bay room enough in 'em with three pair av socks."

Peter ignored this trivial persiflage. His was a serious nature.

"No, I belief I like better t'e Horn t'an runnin' t'e bloody eastin' down," he concluded judicially, reverting to the original subject of discussion.

"Huh!" exclaimed Mick. "As fer that, Mate, I like better a Mediterranean cruise — er a elbow on a N' York bar."

IX

SHIP'S CHORES

What a large volume of adventures may be grasped within this little span of life, by him who interests his heart in everything, and who, having eyes to see what time and chance are perpetually holding out to him as he journeyeth on his way, misses nothing he can fairly *lay his hands on.*

— "A SENTIMENTAL JOURNEY"

WHAT do you do aboard ship? How do you spend all your time?

These are questions that are often put to me, especially by persons with the slightly hazy notion that the only work aboard a ship consists in steering it and that this is done by the captain, with occasional assistance from the mate.

If a transatlantic passenger liner is a floating hotel, then a tramp cargo carrier is a floating workshop. In the latter there is more mechanical work and less housemaid's drudgery than in a passenger vessel. Scrubbing decks and polishing brass, those twin bugaboos of a passenger liner, had no terrors for us. Our decks were all of iron, and the most we did was to flush them with a hose on Saturdays. There was little brass work about the ship, and that was commonly neglected.

But while keeping a passenger vessel in condition and repair is mostly done by shore gangs in port, aboard a tramp steamship this work is done by the crew in the long weeks at sea. A steamship is a complicated mechanical structure, by no means all of whose machinery is below deck and therefore the responsibility of the engineers. The men on deck have to care for the externals of a sea-going warehouse, with its derricks, rigging, anchors, and other contrivances exposed to tremendous strain and devastating weather.

To keep such a warehouse properly protected with paint in the presence of an ever-corroding salt air is in itself no light chore, especially aboard a new ship like the *Lethington* which had been sent to sea with little more than a priming coat. And before putting new paint on an iron surface you spend hours chipping off the old blistered or rusted coats with a dull-edged hammer made for the purpose. Or else, if the existing paint is good enough to remain, you have to wash off the soot and grime with what sailors expressively call soogey-woogey. (This is my phonetic spelling of the word. It is also written suegee-wuegee, suji-wuji, and in other ways.) White paint has to be washed continually aboard a steamship, whether it is to be repainted or not, and soogey-woogeying is a job as frequent as it is cordially detested.

I well recall Mick's look of boredom and disgust when for the first time aboard the *Lethington* he saw the boatswain coming forward with a couple of buckets, the contents of which it was only too easy to guess.

"Roarin' flames uh hell, Bose! Ain't yuh got nothin' better 'n' *that* fer us tuh do?" Mick inquired querulously. "Of all crucifyin' jobs . . ."

He let the sentence float seaward unfinished while Bose, setting the buckets in front of the watch with a laugh, turned to me.

"Iss it a wee bit o' soogey-woogeyin' ye would like tae be doin' noo, Yank? Mick here wull be keen tae be at it wi' ye, I'm thinkin'."

Mick looked my way with a sickly grin and asked, "How do yuh like soogey-woogeyin'? . . . Never done any? Well, luck certainly has been blowin' yer way. Yuh'll do more 'n' plenty afore yuh gits clear uh this hooker."

"What is soogey-woogey?" I asked innocently.

Mick spat a copious spray of tobacco juice to leeward.

"It's hell," he said simply. Then more specifically, "Sometimes it's jest soft soap an' water; more of'en there's caustic soda tuh give it bite."

Soogeying is an unfailing stand-by when there is no other work to be done, or when it is raining and jobs like painting have to be discontinued. To stand by the hour in a drizzling rain with an icy wind cutting through you while dirty water trickles down your sleeves or spatters in your eye is enough to make any sailor hope never to see the ocean again.

In spite of a usual plenitude of work aboard ship, occasions do arise when, owing to bad weather or some other reason, there is nothing which it is in the least worth while to have the men do. On such occasions are they allowed to knock off? Not noticeably. That would be as unheard of as to lay out a piece of work and tell them that if they wanted to hurry through it they would be free afterward. A sailor is always kept at work during working hours whether there is anything to do or not. Sailors are aware of this and in tackling any job are careful to distinguish between one which they know ought to be put through and one that is trumped up simply to keep them going. When it is necessary, sailors are as rapid and intelligent workers as are to be found anywhere. When it isn't, they are unrivalled artists at doing nothing without seeming to be idle.

When we were set at a job, instead of doing it, gathering up our things, and going off to report that it was done, we used to putter around until we got other orders. When almost through some one would say, "Take it easy there, mates. We've got to make this hold out until Bose comes around."

If the boatswain wanted to have done with the work, he would tell us to finish and get at something else. If not, he would make some comment and pass on. Sometimes in a confidential overflow he would say, "Noo, byes, tak' yewr time. Ye micht as weel be doin' this job as anither."

It often happens aboard ship that the men might as well quit work and go below if it weren't for the boatswain. The boatswain wouldn't mind if it weren't for the mate. The mate wouldn't mind if it weren't for the captain. And the captain wouldn't mind if he weren't a slave to tradition, or too mean or lazy or drunk to take any interest in the question.

There is another development of this all-important idea of preserving the appearances. I once suggested to Mick that I would ask the permission of one of the officers to do something. I've forgotten now what it was — some trifling personal request — but I well recall Mick's answer as he covered me with a glance of pity and disfavor.

"Don't never ask no officer's permission tuh do nothin'," he said, with a prodigality of negatives indicative of his earnestness.

"Why not?" I pleaded in mild wonder.

"Because he'll say yuh can't," retorted Mick shortly.

"But this is all right," I persisted. "Why refuse?"

"Don't make no difference; I'm tellin' yuh what he'll do," said Mick, irritated at my denseness. I pressed him for reasons, but though sure through experience of his facts, he had analyzed the causes only vaguely.

"They think they're better 'n' we are," he said evasively. "They won't never do nothin' fer a sailor."

He was more than half right. However well disposed an officer may be personally, the law of his caste compels him to look down on a man before the mast; to do him a courtesy or a kindness might be construed as a breach in the wall between them. Besides, to refuse a request, no matter how reasonable, relieves an officer of responsibility.

"Ef you wanta do it," was Mick's parting advice, "go ahead. Nobody's liable tuh know about it, an' ef they do, they ain't nothin' they can do tuh yuh."

Mick's attitude was similar to that of White, who was fond of expressing the philosophy of a long life at sea in the saying, "W'at the eye don't see the 'eart don't grieve."

Possibly the proverb is not without application ashore.

This leads me to say a word about our officers, whom I have sketched so far only in outline. Most of them must remain so, for, owing to the reasons just alluded to, I never had other than a formal relation with them, and not much even of that. I did not address a dozen words to the captain, nor he to me, until I applied for my discharge in New Zealand. I wonder if the average landsman has any idea of how solitary the life of a tramp steamship's captain is — or how slothful if the skipper so desires.

"What does the old man do all day?" I once asked Mick.

"Him? Do? What should the old buzzard do all day but keep his bunk, same uz you er me would ef there weren't no officers tuh horse us round."

"Do all captains have it so easy?"

"N-no, I wouldn't say as they does quite-like. The skipper of a boat carryin' passengers has tuh look after 'em, an' aboard a windjammer the old man most gen'rully watches the way his officers handle the ship an' gives 'em orders. Even the cap'n of a cargo liner on a short run, er with a lot uh stops, he jest about cleans up work in one port when he's in another. But the skipper of a crucifyin' tramp, out at sea an' with no port till weeks ahead — I'll be billy-be-hanged ef I knows what he has tuh do, er does."

"He has to check up on the ship's position at noon every day, doesn't he?"

"That's the helluva hard day's work, ain't it? 'N', blast his eyes, he doesn't bother about that half the time, ef he can count on his officers."

A captain in such a position may or may not relieve the tedium by social diversions with the engineers or mates. Some do not. Sometimes they elect even to eat alone. There would be time for a vast amount of uninterrupted reading or study — but the captains of tramp steamships are not often bookmen or students.

What are they? Primarily they are men of action who have come to the top in a school of hard words and hard knocks — a school in which success is not always attained through an exercise of the finer qualities. I know how lady passengers love to gush over steamship captains. They're such dears! Even men travelers think it's swanky to hobnob with the skipper; he's such a hearty, good-natured fellow, oozing jokes and adventures. Personally I think skippers, like the "efficient American business man", are a bit overrated. I've traveled with a good many as a passenger and not a few as a sailor. In the latter capacity, I admit, I have not enjoyed a chummy relation with them. Perhaps that's the trouble. My prejudice may be merely envy. Anyhow, even when basking as a passenger in the friendship of a captain, I cannot help taking a squint at him from the door of the forecastle. I should like to hear

Cardiff's canny comment; to have White's obscene but mature judgment.

Of the captain of the *Lethington* I carry almost nothing in memory except the picture of a rather bulky, heavy-faced, unprepossessing man, whom from time to time I used to see pacing to and fro across the bridge or sauntering about in front of his cabin. Even on a vessel as small in size and personnel as our three-thousand-ton ocean hobo the captain did not personally supervise any work; he didn't even inspect it. I do not recall ever seeing him come from amidships to the forward main deck or go aft as far as the poop. Unlike the commander of Gilbert's good ship *Mantelpiece* it cannot be said that

> He was adored by all his men
> For worthy Captain Reece, R.N.,
> Did all that lay within him to
> Promote the comfort of his crew.

The commander of the *Lethington* was a lonely, well-fed animal, caged by convention or his own ideas to his narrow quarters amidships.

The chief mate is responsible for the physical care of a vessel; he is the head of the department of plant and structure. Thus our mate came in closer contact with us sailors than any of the other officers, although our direct relations were mostly with the boatswain, who might be described as the foreman of the deck. Fortunately we had a good boatswain, an amiable, quiet-spoken Scot. He worked with brawn rather than brains but never found a safety valve for his temper by blowing it off upon the crew, nor did he rely upon a tornado of language as the means of imposing his authority.

I think it was Dougherty who gave the mate the nickname Pontius Pilate. A group of us were on the forward deck when Dougherty, glancing toward the bridge where our chief officer paced to and fro, exclaimed, "Look at Pontius Pilate up there takin' the air."

"He can crucifyin' well stay there fer all uh me," answered Mick. "I don't want him messin' around with our work here on deck."

The mate was a small, tame-looking man, suggestive of a house-broken husband rather than an imperious pontiff. But he wore a bushy pirate-black beard, which with his staring dark eyes lent severity to his face at a distance, and to compensate for his unimposing stature he spoke in a deep, gruff rumble which he catapulted out of his diaphragm in irregular sequence. He was a fussy man, less self-made than old maid, yet a conscientious — I suspect even religious — officer. (His language would have passed muster in what used to be known as a female seminary, but is now described as a select school for girls.) I must admit, too, that he seemed to be a thorough seaman. This admission comes grudgingly, because I was no favorite of Pontius Pilate. He appeared to regard me — indeed he put it into unmistakable language more than once — as a lazy wastrel and soldier whom he had been ill-advised in taking aboard. I can't imagine where he got the notion — unless perhaps he had observed me at work.

The second was my favorite among the officers. A ruddy-faced, middling-youngish man, with sandy hair and mustache, he was much more the seaman type than either Pontius Pilate or the skipper. As an officer he was neither pompous nor dictatorial, but seemed to be supported by a philosophy and a sense of humor that appealed to me. A chief consideration, I suppose, in my liking for the second, was that he was well disposed toward me. I add, with some reluctance, that as he seldom directed the crew's work, he knew next to nothing about me. The third was a youngster who naturally sought to cover his inexperience with a bit of swagger. He had nothing to do with the crew except that when he had the watch on the bridge he gave occasional directions to the man at the wheel.

The routine was inflexible but discipline was not harsh aboard our ocean hobo. Life did not go on precisely as aboard the *Walloping Window-blind*, where

> The man at the wheel was taught to feel
> Contempt for the wildest blow,
> And it often appeared, when the weather had cleared,
> That he'd been in his bunk below.

Yet there was no instance during the entire passage when a deck officer struck a sailor or used any kind of physical violence. There is not much of that sort of brutality any longer. Indeed, I suspect that that aspect of sea life has been vastly exaggerated by fiction writers and — much as I hate to suggest it — even by those supposedly presenting sober facts. The worst offenders were the Yankee "hell ships" of the middle of the last century. There was some excuse for that brutality, perhaps, especially in the California clippers, since they were manned by nondescript and notoriously rough crews. But chiefly this brutality was a tradition and a habit which, like most violence, fed upon itself. Crews came aboard all set to knock out their officers and officers embarked all a-tingle to cave in the crews. Usually both got what they wanted.

Happily those days have passed, outlawed by legislation forbidding an officer to attack a sailor except in self-defense. As Mick explained, "The officers ain't allowed tuh do nothin' tuh yuh now, except fer mutiny — nothin', that is, but log yuh [fine you for disobedience or breach of discipline], er disrate yuh ef yuh can't do yer work [reduce you to a lower category of employment with correspondingly less pay]. They ain't got no right tuh hit yuh, an officer ain't, unless you off an' wallops him first."

"No," said Cardiff quizzically, "but just the same, don't take no chances an' cheek an officer what's bigger than you are, Yank, or you're liable to find yourself on the broad of your back. They ain't allowed to hit you, that's right enough, but what they're allowed an' what they do is a different thing again."

"T'at's damn well right too," came from Peter. "A sailor he doan haff naythink to do wit' t'e law. Not of'en, he doan. Nor an' officer nayther. T'ey has it out on deck an' t'at's all t'ere iss to it, yaas."

Largely this is true. A sailor is still likely to be knocked down for a cheeky answer to an officer, if the latter is big enough, and a bucko officer may get a purple eye for exasperating a sailor, but in neither case will there be recourse to the law or even a complaint to the captain. The point is that organized and premeditated brutality has mostly disappeared. A better tradition, a more peaceable code, has supplanted it, in the realization of which protective laws for the sailor have helped even though in practice they are rarely invoked.

X

A BLEAK PASSAGE

Storm along and round she'll go,
To me way, hay, storm along, John!
Storm along through frost and snow,
Come along, get along, storm along, John!
—SAILORS' CHANTY

MOUNTAINS and valleys; valleys and mountains. Turgid green slopes rising majestically astern and abeam, up, up, up, threatening a waterslide that would engulf us, then heaving forward and onward just in time to prevent it. Not waves as one knows them in other oceans, but swaying, throbbing fields, moving irresistibly eastward in alternating hills and meadows.

Thus I remember the seas down in 40° South, probably the loneliest and the most awesome on our planet. Nowhere else, I believe, are there waves so gigantic. At the Horn that mountainous promontory breaks the waves so that they are rough and dangerous but seldom so large individually. In running the easting down, on the other hand, one is borne along on water which seemingly rolls uninterrupted round and round the world, driven with gathering momentum by a wind blowing ever from west to east. Such waves do not break and dash themselves to pieces as others do; they are acres of water, too long, too broad, too expansive to dissipate themselves thus. Here and there the crest, wrenched by the wind, is toppled over for some yards with a thud and a roar, sending white cascades hissing and foaming into the valley beyond, but the safety of a ship lies in the very size and integrity of these rolling hills and meadows, one undulation of which encompasses a vessel's entire length, bearing it up and on like a rowboat. The principal danger is that a ship may not be able to keep pace with them, in which case she may be flooded from astern and pounded under.

I remember one glum, forbidding afternoon when, at work on the after deck, I watched with gathering apprehension the seas behind us. As wave upon wave came on from behind, first crouching, then leaping upward in a sky-blotting mass almost over the poop, it looked each time as if *this* one would come thundering down upon the deck, sweeping us with a tidal wave from stern to stem.

"Don't you ever have to bring the ship around and heave to, head on, in a sea like this?" I asked the boatswain.

"Oh, aye, we do that. I ha' been thinkin' fur an hoor that the auld mon 'ud be braengin' her aroond. But I doot if he could do it the noo. He's waitit ower lang. The seas 'ud tak' her broadsite an' wash her under. We wull jist ha' tae tak' oor chances noo in runnin' till the starm blows itsel' oot."

Nor is there comfort in raising one's eyes from the rolling acres of grim, gray-green sea toward the sky. There is no smile there — or at least there was only a rare and brief one for us. Mostly we traveled under a cold, leaden canopy, often shut off by driving rain or moisture-packed snow, while the horizon — never far away because of the size of the waves — was frequently still further reduced by a circle of mist.

It was a bleak passage — five weeks of cold and rain and salt-laden, marrow-biting damp. The *Lethington* proved herself an excellent sea boat, although no washerwoman ever had a hull combining more bulk with less shape. With wind and sea always aft, we shipped comparatively little water even in heavy weather, but a good deal of the time we kept life lines rigged along the forward deck in order not to be swept away in going between the forecastle and the bridge by the water which swirled over the bulwarks amidships as we sank into the chasms between the heights.

In the forecastle it was as cold, wet, and damp as on deck. The relentless seas, ever buffeting, wrenching, penetrating, worked their way through the pores of the *Lethington's* iron skin, dripping into our living quarters from above or trickling down from the edges of the portholes. There was no place in which to hang our streaming oilskins except the forecastle, and puddles from these garments grew into rivulets which coursed about as ubiquitously and irrelevantly as cockroaches in a well-warmed galley. The sticky, briny damp penetrated even the inner recesses of our bunks. There was no way in which to dry anything, and clean clothing pulled from our bags was as clammy as that which we took off.

Cardiff clumped into the forecastle on a drippy, cheerless morning just before eight o'clock. He had come forward to strike the bell when the clock reached the hour. Water trickled from his sea boots and the edges of his oilskin jacket, while a tiny rivulet spouted from the peak of his sou'wester. He was in good humor at the thought of quitting a heaving, rain-beaten deck for four hours between the blankets of his bunk. Blinking slightly in the semi-darkness of the forecastle, his amiable, quizzical smile flitted from one to another of the still sleepy men sitting on the lockers.

The *Lethington's* bow leapt upward, lurched drunkenly to one side, and then dropped sickeningly into an ocean gorge so as to send the pit of one's stomach up to collide with his Adam's apple. The few tins in our rude cupboard rattled from one side to the other, the wooden box of sea biscuit broke its lashings and crashed into the nearest bunk, the mess kid, from which the just-arisen watch had removed the dry hash as cleanly as if it had been the platter of Jacky Sprat and his wife, tobogganed swiftly across the floor until it struck the doorsill, while the coffee pot did several awkward somersaults, disgorging its sickly brown contents as it rolled. Cardiff bent his legs dexterously so as to keep his balance on a surface which seemed to have lost its moorings and to be gyrating about in space like a drunken planet.

"Everything goes with a swing in this ship," he said cheerfully, his smile broadening.

Dougherty sat gloomily on his locker, waiting the call to go on deck, and resented so much good humor.

"Hang *you*, Jack; I'm all right," he growled sarcastically (although the verb he used was one less refined than "hang"). It is a favorite proverb among sailors when they wish to suggest that a mate is thinking mainly of Number One. Dougherty shivered and added, "We ought to have a bogie [a small, closed stove] in the fo'c's'le on a passage loike this wan. It's cold enough in here to freeze your singlet to your belly."

"Yaas," put in Peter. "In win'yammers I haff alvays hadt a bogie ven ve vass runnin' t'e eastin' down." His usual philosophy was upset by the gloom of his watchmates and he spoke cheerlessly.

"What yuh oughta have on shipboard, yuh crucifyin' well don't," observed Mick testily. "An' speakin' uh swing, I've gotta go up on the bridge fer a two-hour swing on that gosh-blamed wheel." Mick disliked steering even in good weather and loathed it in bad.

Meanwhile Cardiff braced his legs for another jump, slide, and drop of the bow and shook himself dog-fashion. The spray from Cardiff's wet clothing reached Dougherty and irritated him still further.

"What the blisterin' hell are you tryin' to do?" he flared (although the adjective he used was one less squeamish than "blistering"). "Kape your rain storm to yourself, young fellow me lad, or you'll get a bash on the snout wid this," and he shook his right fist menacingly.

Cardiff grinned upon his disgruntled shipmates and went out to strike the bell. "It's fine weather outside," he observed.

"Yis," said Dougherty, as he rose, buttoning the collar of his oilskin jacket about his neck, "foine weather for ducks — an' geese loike yez bay."

A gust of wind and rain slapped Cardiff in the face, but his grin persisted. Turning his head backward for a moment, he chanted in the direction of his comrades a bit of forecastle philosophy:

Beefsteak when you're hungry,
Whisky when you're dry;
Heaven when you're hard up,
And hell when you die.

Bleak yet in many ways rich days — those which we spent buffeting the lonely, tumultuous seas between the Cape of Storms and Australia. It was good to face wind and weather on the swaying decks. Wind I have always loved; loved to walk against it, ride against it, sail against it; loved it breathing softly or roaring loudly through the trees or over the waters. For me nothing in nature is more exhilarating than to be out in the wind; nothing is more soothing than to be snug inside where I can hear a gale whipping at roof and shutters, or crying, hooting, and bellowing as it whirls against windows and races under eaves.

So I found it good to be on deck, and anything but bad to lie well covered in my bunk, jostled by the rude boundings of the vessel, listening to the hundred and one odd clamorings of a steamship in heavy weather — bolts snarling, plates whining, stanchions grunting, girders moaning; waves slosh-washing against the ship's sides or thub-dubbing on top of the forecastle head; the slap, slap, slap of a fretful rope's end; the knock and bang of a loose coupling; above all the thunderous overtone of crashing seas and the shrilling of the wind through the wire rigging.

The life of the forecastle, too, grew pleasanter and more friendly. The deep-water sailor is a "hard nut" who does not easily give or take. He has been brought up in the school of "Every man wash his own shirt", and he joins any new ship, in a sense, with his hand against every man and every man's hand against him. It took us all the way down to the Cape to get on a livable footing with each other. At the start there had been a feeling against me — not of enmity exactly but rather a lack of fellowship because I was a passage man and an American. Now the inclemencies of the weather and the common discomforts of a sailor's life brought us together.

What my shipmates thought of me I hardly know. I knew little enough of some of them and they less of me. I have already tried to make it plain that I went to sea in order to be a sailor and that I desired to make my way on that basis and no other. What I told my companions of my past was mostly untrue and intended to give a plausible aspect to the story that I was on my way to New Zealand with the intention of getting a job on a sheep farm. I did my best to conceal any education or experience inconsistent with the humble past and modest ambitions of my story. Friends of mine will doubtless be found to say that the concealment of any advantages which I had in the way of education or experience could not have been difficult. Possibly so. Anyhow, I did have a camera to conceal, and I concealed it, much as I should have liked to make a pictorial record of the voyage, for I soon sensed that such a possession would be regarded as out of keeping with the life of my companions or the pretensions about myself which I was trying to maintain.

I do not imagine that my shipmates believed much of my story, but neither did they guess anywhere near the truth. Doubtless they surmised that I was boasting about my past performances and lying in regard to my reasons for coming away to sea. These last they assuredly attributed to having got into some trouble ashore, but thought no worse of me on that account, a number of them having probably embarked upon a sea career under similar pressure. Indeed, it is hard to see how sailors would be found for all the world's ships if there was not a good deal of trouble ashore to get into.

When I say that my companions thought no worse of me because they suspected that my presence among them was occasioned by some difficulty ashore, I am probably understating the facts. They thought better of me than if they had believed me to be such a fool as voluntarily to elect a life in the forecastle. In fact, sailors often try to make others believe that some dark shadow — usually an affair with a woman — compelled them to leave a good family and position when nothing of the sort is true. This is well enough understood among them so that a good deal of forecastle humor is based upon it. Diggle was talking once about something in his past in a way which Dougherty evidently regarded as overpretentious.

"Oh, I see," said Dougherty sneeringly. "Me bold hero had to lave his handsome home in Park Lane because he had got the slavey in a family way."

The laugh that followed cut short Diggle's reminiscences.

The feature of my own story which I think was received with the greatest incredulity was that I was entirely without money — one of the few details that was true. Naturally, it seemed hardly credible to my companions that one who had presumably robbed a bank or even merely stolen a fur overcoat should be quite penniless. Most of them, as I later discovered, dismissed this part of my tale as the flimsiest fiction until I proved it in Melbourne by my inability to go out and get drunk.

Looking back upon it from this distance, I think I may have been more intransigent, more inflexible, in the suppression of my past and my personality than was necessary or desirable. It compelled me to be, and to be regarded as, even more of a duffer and dunderhead than I was, which was not good either for my self-respect or my progress. And yet I do not know that I could have done what I set out to do otherwise. One must either fish or cut bait. Outside of the drama I do not believe there is any such thing as a gentleman crook. Either he is no gentleman or he is an inferior crook. There is a moral in the old song of the lady whose sweetheart abandoned her when he learned she had a wooden leg because he could not live with half a woman and half a tree.

I came to know Mick better during these grim gray days. A curious mixture of flint and putty he was. As an

American he was disposed to hold himself (and me) rather above the rest on board, and his naturally pugnacious nature led him generally to carry a chip on his shoulder. Finding me one day disputing (pleasantly enough) some point with Diggle, Mick pulled me aside.

"Don't argue with him," Mick protested in a voice of disapproval. "Don't argue with that fella."

"Oh, he's all right. We're not mad at each other. We're just talking."

Mick glowered his disgust.

"Don't argue with him, I tell yuh. Punch him in the nose."

That was ever Mick's method of arriving at truth.

Drink was Mick's corroding weakness. It dogged him so ashore that he was useless there — and he knew it.

"I don't seem tuh care about wimmin," he remarked quizzically one day, when others had been dwelling on that subject. "All I does when I'm ashore is tuh tank up with booze. I don't seem tuh care fer nothin' else."

Mick was an expert on jails, due to the drunken brawls into which his thirst and pugnacity inevitably led him when ashore. He was familiar with the jails of all the world's great seaports, and he usually began any yarn with the preface, "That reminds me uh the way they used tuh do in the lockup at Valparaiso," or, "I had jest come out uh the jug in Antwerp . . ."

Thanks to a loosening of distrust and a tightening of fellowship, the forecastle, in spite of cold and wet and dark, was a more comfortable place during the last than the first half of the passage. I had included a few books, mostly paper-bound and hardly more than half a dozen in all, in the scanty luggage that I brought aboard. There was "Vanity Fair", I remember, a red-backed Everyman edition. I was about to add that I recalled the possession of this volume because of the impression left by its reading, but I remember now that I had borrowed it without permission from my brother's bookcase and was later taken to task by him for leaving it in the antipodes. Perhaps that has more to do with my recollection of it. Of such trivialities are the lasting imprints upon our memories made!

From some scribbled quotations that I find in a small notebook — used for surreptitious jottings during my travels — I think I must have read also "The Mill on the Floss", "A Pair of Blue Eyes", "The History of Henry Esmond, Esq.", and "The Confessions of an English Opium-Eater." Last and by all odds most important, I had a copy of the World Almanac!

My books were the only ones in the forecastle except a "red-hot mama" story left in Peter's bunk by some member of a previous crew. I passed my volumes around, but they came back promptly and with pleasingly little wear and tear. There was a brisk demand at first for "A Pair of Blue Eyes" — almost necessitating a queue or a waiting list. The title suggested another "red-hot mama" story, the other one having been passed around the forecastle until about worn out. But in the end "A Pair of Blue Eyes" proved to be as much of a dud as all the others.

All the others? All except the World Almanac. It was borrowed again and again by my shipmates, who took turns in conning it while they lay propped in their bunks by day, dependent on the feeble light of the portholes, or as they sat at the table by night under the flickering, smelly slush lamp swung on gymbals from a stanchion.

The hard-looking, hard-talking, hard-hitting White, the most obscene-spoken and most human man in the forecastle, was especially fond of this book of miscellaneous facts, the contents of which often served as topics of conversation among us.

I think there was nothing peculiar in this liking of the *Lethington's* crew for information. Workingmen generally prefer facts to fiction when they are clearly and simply set forth without any attempt to "dress them up" in order that they shall be more "interesting." I wonder sometimes if a great body of potential readers is not lost in the tendency of publishers of books, magazines, and newspapers on the one hand to cater to the readiness of the multitude for tawdry entertainment or, on the other, to content themselves with an appeal to that small minority of intellectual aristocrats which is so complacently sure that "literature" and "art" is in its custody.

My own position in the forecastle was appreciably stronger at this stage in the voyage than it had been earlier. I had no more impressed my mates with my finesse as a seaman than I had the officers, but I had minded my own business, made no enemies, and greatly to my surprise not had — not had to have — a single fight, although in common with the others I had submitted without protest to a certain amount of bossing and bullying by White and Dougherty, the self-constituted buckos of their respective watches. They were the oldest men in the forecastle, and aboard ship I found a good deal of deference to and respect for years, provided the bearer of them evidenced abilities as a seaman commensurate with the length of his service.

My possession of a World Almanac and readiness with certain information on which the others were short had set me up unwittingly — indeed unwillingly — as a kind of arbiter and question bureau to which disputed points might be referred. I had felt it legitimate, also, to offset my shortcomings in seamanship by displaying what I knew of navigation. This was no great shakes, but even an elementary knowledge of latitude and longitude, of the sextant, and of the use of charts gave me standing in the forecastle, where I found navigation to be a science greatly respected but in no way understood. Even of geography a sailor's ideas are often hopelessly distorted. Men who have been around the world a dozen times, and can name and describe as eye-witnesses nearly every important port of the Seven Seas, often know nothing of the relative positions of these places and hold astounding ideas about the way in which the different countries are grouped on the earth's surface. At St. Vincent, for instance, Peter insisted that the oranges we bought came from Brazil, as the Cape Verde Islands, he said, were only a few miles from that part of South America. And repeated arguments with Mick failed to convince him that he was mistaken in his belief that he had sailed from Vancouver to Yokohama in a ship laying her course due east.

The knowledge of the world which the ordinary sailor is supposed to pick up by knocking about its waters is oddly limited. It is confined to the seaports and even in them chiefly to grog shops, brothels, and a few cheap amusement places. Of the life and characteristics of a country he gets little idea, except when he deserts his ship and goes inland. Nor does he always learn much then.

Most seamen lead a "sedentary life", as Joseph Conrad puts it. "Their minds are of the stay-at-home order, and their home is always with them — the ship; and so is their country — the sea. One ship is very much like another, and the sea is always the same. In the immutability of their surroundings the foreign shores, the foreign faces, the changing immensity of life, glide past, veiled not by a sense of mystery but by a slightly disdainful ignorance; for there is nothing mysterious to a seaman unless it be the sea itself, which is the mistress of his existence and as inscrutable as Destiny. For the rest, after his hours of work, a casual stroll or a casual spree on shore suffices to unfold for him the secret of a whole continent, and generally he finds the secret not worth knowing."

Mick expressed the same idea less subtly but not less dramatically when I was talking with him once about the opportunities of seafaring.

"It must be nice," I remarked, "to spend one's time in traveling free about the world, looking it over."

"Yeah?" he asked, a little dubiously.

"Seeing all its countries and cities, getting to know the different peoples, how they live, and all," I continued

"H-m-m-m!" returned Mick, half scornful, half ashamed, "all sailors learns about the places they visits is the names uh the drinks."

XI

THE SECOND DOGWATCH

Ship of the body, ship of the soul,
voyaging, voyaging, voyaging.
— WALT WHITMAN

THE second dogwatch was the part of the twenty-four hours that I most enjoyed while running the easting down to Australia. The dogwatches were two tricks of two hours each, instead of the usual four. The first dogwatch was from four to six o'clock in the afternoon; the second followed immediately, from six to eight o'clock in the evening. The purpose was to divide the twenty-four hours into an uneven number of watches, so that a man would not have the same hours on deck two days in succession. Among the firemen there was no such rotation. A man worked during the same periods every day, but owing to the more exhausting character of his job he did a total of only eight hours instead of twelve — two tricks of four hours each with a rest of eight hours between.

"Firemen al'ays likes tuh git in the four-to-eight watch," Mick explained.

"I should think that would be the worst of the three," I answered. "You have to turn out just before daylight in the morning and you are at work again during the late afternoon and early evening — the time when it's most fun to be free."

"Yeah, but the four-to-eight is the black-pan watch; it gits all the hoodle."

"All the what?"

"All the hoodle, I'm tellin' yuh. The men helps with the galley fire — fetches the coal 'n' cleans out the ashes fer the cook. So he gives 'em some special grub-like — fills up a black iron roastin' pan. That's why they calls the four-to-eight trick the black-pan watch."

"But this hoodle — where does it come from?"

"Well, aboard ships carryin' passengers it comes from their dinin' rooms 'n' is mighty tasty-like. Aboard this wagon its mostly left-overs from the officers' mess. Ashore it'd all go in the garbage can, I s'pose, but fer a sailor it's a bit of a change from salt horse 'n' sea biscuit."

Long custom has consecrated the dogwatches to recreation. A sailor spending twelve hours a day on duty does not have a great deal of free time beyond that needed for sleep, meals, and mending and washing his clothes. The self-imposed discipline of the forecastle forbids conversation or noise there when any one wants to sleep, and this is most of the twenty-four hours except during the dogwatches. The program then is supper and a good time.

As a day man I was at work during the first dogwatch, but I came to look forward to the second, not merely because it brought supper and the end of the day's grind but more especially because it was a social time. There was an occasional game of cards under the dodging shadows of the slush lamp and a still more occasional song — for Cardiff was the only one among us with any gift in that direction — but our chief preoccupation was that never-failing diversion of the sailor, yarning.

I enjoyed especially the evenings in the forecastle with the port watch, the one to which White belonged. He had never read the five-foot bookshelf or even an advertisement of it, but he was one of those fortunate persons who has only to open his mouth in order to make those within earshot begin to listen. Some might say that White's yarns were entertaining because they were ornamented with obvious whoppers. My belief is that they fascinated because they held so much essential truth — because, drawn with entire candor from his own life, they were so naïvely and shamelessly self-revealing.

Lolling in our bunks or lounging on the lockers, we debated all the great questions from the pros and cons of whether a sailor ought to marry to a symposium on what port would give one the longest drunk for the least expenditure of money.

"A sailor 'adn't never ought t' 'ave a wife," was White's opinion. "A sailor w'at's married works fer some other man, 'e does."

There was no disposition to dispute this verdict. White ought to know, for he was married. He and Dougherty were the only ones in our forecastle of whom that was true, but it was a question how true it was *of* them or how true the wives were *to* them. White and Dougherty both spoke dubiously of the probable constancy of their helpmates, and certainly the idea of a reciprocal fidelity never entered the head of either. Both of them claimed to have made allotments of their pay to keep the home fires burning, but I surmised that unless the ladies foraged considerable fuel on their own account their hearths were anything but comfortable on cold nights.

"I misdoubt if I'll ever marry," said Cardiff judicially, "leastways, as long as I stops at sea. A sailor's never home. What sense is there in his havin' one?"

"A sailor w'at's married keeps up a 'ome fer some other man," reiterated White. "As Cardiff sayes, a sailor ain't never 'ome. W'at good is 'e as a 'usband, I say? W'at does 'e expect o' 'is missus, any'ow? It's too long t' wait. Yes, that's w'at one sayes t' me once as 'ad a sailor 'usband.

'Yuh certainly done me good,' she sayes. 'My man's been gone fer more 'n' a year. It's too long t' wait.' "

As the laugh subsided Diggle stuck his head out over the edge of his bunk and expressed a general sentiment among sailors with the platitude, "It's better to marry on the instalment plan. Eh, Yank?"

Yank had no reply. Such questions had ever been too deep for him.

White's face crinkled again in a smile of amused recollection as his eyes seemed to be following a shining path far from the dull lights and somber shadows of the forecastle. " 'Yuh certainly done me good,' she sayes. 'It's too long t' wait.' "

British sailors are rarely profane. They do little or none of the goddamning and jesuschristing that is current among American workingmen, nor do they curse with the picturesque richness and descriptive power characteristic of the fishermen and coasting sailors of our country. On the other hand, they are far more given to expressions that are generally regarded as obscene or indecent. There is one such word, in particular, which as adjective, verb, or noun breaks their conversation with almost the frequency of a punctuation mark.

Rum and women, women and rum, were the topics most often on our lips. It is so among most men living in groups by themselves. Nor do I see why it should be otherwise. Rum and women, women and rum, have been twin solaces for men almost since this earth ceased to be a molten mass — not only twin solaces but practically the unique ones for men with few interests and fewer opportunities following the hard, lonely life of the sea. The significance of these twin solaces is increased for the sailor in proportion to his rare chances for enjoying them, and in his enforced sobriety and celibacy at sea he gets release in talking of pleasures past and prospective with a frankness and robustness that at least relieves him of any charge of prudery or hypocrisy.

But though rum and women were the topics most often on our lips, they were pressed hard in the evenings of these chill, cheerless days between the Cape of Good Hope and Melbourne by the almost equally engrossing subjects of religion and the supernatural. Sailors are seldom adherents of churches or their creeds, but they have generally been subject to religious influences of some sort in their boyhood, to which they continue at least nominal allegiance, partly because they are not enough given to rationalization to modify their views but also because sheer atheism does not live easily afloat. Ashore, especially in our great cities, we see so much of the work of man and so little of that of any other power, we see mind so generally victorious over matter, that we are able to accept a universe without an Almighty with fair complaisance. At sea it is otherwise. In the presence of a pathless and all-destructive ocean, the weakness of man, the insignificance of his skill and cunning, is pressed upon one, reinforcing belief in higher powers and the supernatural.

It struck me that deep-water sailors were less superstitious than the more provincial ones with whom I had been thrown in American fishing and coasting schooners. The cruder superstitions had been sloughed off in the associations of world voyaging. The legend of the Flying Dutchman, for instance, was not accepted by any of our crew. Even the mystically-inclined Peter said solemnly of it, "I belief t'at iss naythink but a yarn," a judgment in which all concurred. Yet right on top of the remark Dougherty introduced a fairy story of his own.

"Did yez ivver hear tell av the Swansea bark, bound for Iquique or some place on the West Coast? . . . How whin they was off the Horn the mate found written on his slate wan night, 'Tur-rn back.' The next night an' the night after he found it written there again — three toimes — 'Tur-rn back.' Thin the captain found it written wanst for him *in ink*, 'Tur-rn back.' They wint back, an' the skipper got twelve months in jail. They shipped another crew, an' they've nivver heerd tell of 'em to this day."

"I might not disbelief t'at," said Peter, evidently impressed.

"Oh, that's true," concluded Dougherty, with finality. He didn't propose that anybody should assume that he was spinning a mere yarn.

"Mebbe yuh never heerd about the English skipper who swore he'd sail tuh Melbourne er hell in sixty days?" asked Mick, addressing the question to me. "He had a fast ship 'n' was a he-devil fer carryin' sail. 'N' one time he set out from Liverpool fer the Colonies 'n' he ses, 'I've su'prised the people of England; now I'm a-goin' tuh su'prise the Lord God Almighty.' Yeah, that's what he ses, 'I'm a-goin' tuh su'prise the Lord God Almighty.'

"Well, he piled the sail on the brute 'n' he drove her from hell tuh breakfast time. She was under water like a sea lion most uh the way, he a-goin' down below fifty tuh git the gales runnin' the eastin' down. He had the passengers all locked up below. 'Fraid they might git washed overboard. Wouldn't let 'em show their heads above the companion way, 'n' prob'ly they didn't wanta, it was that wet on deck.

"One day they all holds a meetin'. Ses they paid tuh go tuh Australia, not Davy Jones's locker. Asks him not tuh be in sech a crucifyin' hurry. But he jest ses to 'em, 'Hell er Melbourne in sixty days,' 'n' he goes on deck to order more sail.

"Well, he made the run in sixty days, as he ses he would, but he lost his ship jest off Melbourne headlands. They was all drowndid but him. He was washed ashore on the rocks, 'n' he become a shepherd in the Victoria bush, 'n' no one's ever knowed nothin' about him sence. Leastways, that's the way I al'ays hears the story. I don't rightly know whether it's so er not."

Mick was more of a skeptic than the others and inclined to question all yarns, including even his own. I later learned that his story was a fictionized version of the exploits of the famous "Bully" Forbes in the great ship *Marco Polo*.

It was White, bucko, braggart, and "hard nut", who gave the forecastle its most distinctly religious discourse — almost a little sermon it was. Cardiff had been telling of an exploit that a shipmate of his once had with a Bible.

"He was an odd chap as smoked cigarettes instead of a pipe. He had plenty of tobacco but had run out of papers to roll it in. He was bound from Buenos Aires to Pensacola, an' it looked as if the only smoke he'd get would be out of the cook's galley, until he happened to be lookin' in a empty bunk one mornin' an' he sees a Bible left aboard by some sky pilot. That Bible was right enough the Good Book fer him. It fair saved his life, or leastways his throat. He tore it up leaf by leaf, an' it lasted him for cigarette papers all the way from the River Plate to Florida."

"Let me tell yuh, young fella me lad, that the Bible *is* a good book," said White, his stocky legs spread out in front of the locker, while he leaned against an upright of his bunk. "It's got good readin' an' writin' in it, the Bible 'as, an' it's me as is tellin' yuh. I don't 'old much with yer churches er yer priests, but it stands t' reason as a priest can talk better 'n' a drunken sailor like you er me w'at ain't got no learnin'. 'E can talk better an' so 'e's more likely fer to be 'eard; uh? You an' me, we starts t' pray an' right in the middle we stops an' yells out at a mate, 'W'at the 'ell yuh makin' that bloody noise fer?' . . . Religion is like seven ships leavin' fer London. They all takes different routes but they's bound fer the same port. . . . We all needs 'elp."

XII

THE LONELIEST SEAS

At night, the same stars o'er the mast:
The mast sways round — however fast
We fly — still sways and swings around
One scanty circle's starry bound.
O ye ho, boys! Spread her wings!
Fair winds, boys: send her home!
O ye ho!
— GEORGE PARSONS LATHROP

ALL vegetables other than potatoes had been exhausted by the time we rounded the Cape of Good Hope, and even the latter came forward in smaller and smaller quantities, mostly rotten at that.

"We ought to make cracker hash out av this junk, me sons," suggested Dougherty one noon, as he contemplated a mess kid of gristly salt meat and a few starved and spotted boiled potatoes. "It ain't fit for a dacent, well-brought-up sow to ate, as it is, but it'd make champion cracker hash, it would."

"Right you are," said Mick. "Let's save it 'n' make cracker hash fer tea to-night. We'll git Cookie tuh bake it fer us."

"Maybe Cookie he von't do it," suggested Peter. "But," he added more hopefully, "maybe he vill, if ve giff him some nice talk, yaas."

"Oh, he'll do it all right," replied Mick. "Ef he don't wanta at first, I'll land him a smooch in the chops that'll change his mind."

"Oh, aye, he'll do it," agreed Dougherty, "an' it'll make a tasty dish to line a man's stomach wid on a cold avenen instid av jist a swallow av tay an' a biscuit wid a stone in it.''

So we contented ourselves with soup for dinner, borrowed a baking dish from the galley, cut the meat, fat and lean, into bits, and mixed it with small pieces of sea biscuit soaked in water until soft. Whether Cookie was won over by ''nice talk'' from Peter or ''a smooch in the chops'' from Mick I don't know, for I didn't go aft to make the arrangements, but the cracker hash was ready — brown, crisp, and hot — at six o'clock, and made so fine a supper that it became a frequent function with us thereafter. There were other dishes of our own preparation too. It was Peter who suggested dandyfunk, for instance.

''Vat, you doan know vat iss dandyfunk?'' he asked incredulously, when I expressed my interest and displayed my ignorance. ''Efferybody vat go in a win'yammer, he know vat iss dandyfunk, yaas. I show you ven ve haff some time t'is evenin'.''

So together in the second dogwatch we pounded some sea biscuit into dust by putting them in a stout bag and whaling it on the deck. Then we moistened the powder with water, stirred in some of the molasses with which we were supplied for our oatmeal, and added some lumps of pork fat.

''Ve'll haff Cookie bake him to-morrow,'' said Peter, his eyes glistening with anticipation, when we had the dish ready for the oven. ''He's goan to taste goodt, Yank. Aye, he's goan to taste goodt.''

''He'' certainly did. I smack my lips still as I recall that dandyfunk. I should like to have a pan of it before me to-day, hot out of the oven, with little bubbles of fat on top and the rich sweet of the molasses rising to the nostrils in appetizing fragrance. Yet when I recall the poor ingredients, it occurs to me that I ought to wish also for the return of a forecastle appetite and those raw, blustering days in the open which left me at nightfall hungry enough to eat with relish the wooden handle off my knife. Otherwise . . .

In these days of generally better and more bountiful fare on shipboard I don't know whether dandyfunk is a recipe in the sailor's own cook book or not. Anyhow, its place is established in the history of the sea that was. In one version of a famous old chanty we are told:

A Yankee ship's gone down the river,
    Blow, boys, *blow!*
And what do you think they got for dinner?
    Blow, my bully boys, *blow!*
Dandyfunk and donkey's liver,
    Blow, boys, *blow!*
Then blow, my boys, for better weather,
    Blow, my bully boys, *blow!*

Speaking of chanties leads me to say a word about this old folk music of the sea in which lately there has been a great revival of interest. Presumably the word comes from the French verb *chanter* (to sing), following the derivation directly in that among sailors it is always pronounced as if spelled "shanty" — to rhyme with scanty. A chanty was not the effervescence of a sailor's moments of relaxation. It was a working song — the product of his toil — used to obtain unison and rhythm in the heavy manual labor of the sailing ship while tramp, tramp, tramping round the capstan in getting up the anchor, while sawing at the pumps, while hoisting a heavy tops'l yard, while sheeting home a sail. Owing perhaps to the corroding influence of cheap shore melodies, chanties had begun to disappear from the sea even before the sailing ship did. They were not transplanted to steam-driven vessels. Most of the heavier work there is done by power from the engines, but even if it were otherwise it is doubtful if these naïve products of a simpler age — often more of a shout than a song or more of a wail than either — could have survived into the mechanistic era in which we live.

Aboard the *Lethington* I picked up a few snatches of words and a bar or so of music, but nobody appeared to know both the words and the music of even a single complete verse of any chanty. White and Dougherty must have heard most of them, but neither of these men was musical and the chanties had not graved an impression sufficient to last. Cardiff, our one singer, was too young and of too little experience in blue-water windjammers to be familiar with chanties.

Like all true folk songs, chanties were passed down not in written form but from mouth to mouth. Thus there are countless variations and adaptations of the words; fewer of the music. Sometimes the words are boisterous and defiant, like those of the greatest of all halyard chanties, "Blow the Man Down":

Now rouse her right up, boys, for Liverpool town,
Go way — way — blow the man down!
We'll blow the man up and blow the man down,
Oh, give us some time to blow the man down!

At other times the words are weird and plaintive as in "Lowlands":

I dreamed a dream the other night,
Lowlands, Lowlands, away, my John,
I dreamed a dream the other night,
My Lowlands, away!

I dreamed I saw my own true love,
Lowlands, Lowlands, away, my John,
I dreamed I saw my own true love,
My Lowlands, away!

She came to me all in my sleep,
Lowlands, Lowlands, away, my John,
She came to me all in my sleep,
My Lowlands, away!

And then I knew my love was dead,
Lowlands, Lowlands, away, my John,
And then I knew my love was dead,
My Lowlands, away!

Often the substance of these chanties is rollicking nonsense, like

Louis was the King of France,
afore the Revolution.
Away, haul away boys; haul away toge-e-ther;
But Louis got his head cut off,
which spoiled his consti-tu-ti-on.
Away, haul away boys, haul away O!

These working songs of sailors were sung in the form of a solo by the chantyman and a chorus by the rest. The chantyman was a genuine minstrel, surviving at sea years after his like had disappeared on shore. He preserved and originated and passed on the folk songs of the deep. The substance of these songs is not the exotic material of the usual sea fiction. It is not concerned with shipwrecks, escapes in open boats, battles with pirates, or marriages to the dusky daughters of South Sea island chiefs. It is much occupied with the realities that were common to all old-time sailors — with bad food, hard work, cruel weather, degrading treatment, with crimps and boarding houses, with women faithful and faithless (the latter predominating), with the comedy and tragedy of liquor.

Chanties are the most interesting and autochthonous music that has come out of the deep. Yet sailors have never regarded them as music at all. How could they be? They have been part of a sailor's work — part of a sailor himself. They were originated or developed by some tobacco-chewing, rum-soaked young fellow my lad who slept in the next bunk and turned out in dungarees at eight bells to sweat up the halyards with the rest of the watch; whereas music, as every sailor knows, is written by a chap what lives ashore an' wears spats an' striped pants an' has been learned at school proper-like an' as doesn't swill his bloody head off every time he sees the door of a pub.

In their leisure moments, when they are gathered in the forecastle or on deck for a yarn or a sing-song, sailors do not think of chanties. They want *music* — honest-to-God music such as is whistled in the streets of New York or sung by much-painted, little-dressed ladies in smoke-saturated, beer-smelling halls in Poplar, Limehouse, or Bermondsey. The shellback's delights are the latest hits of Broadway or Leicester Square, sprinkled with a certain number of older pieces that are conventionally labelled as "sailors' songs." British and American sailors are even more given to sentimentalism in poetry and song than the general run of their countrymen. They dote on mush about "home" (which they ran away from as boys) and "mother" (to whom, if they have one, they never write, although promising themselves to do so once every fortnight). Their hearts rise to their mouths as some mate trolls feelingly of a maid with eyes of blue who to him will e'er be true. And so on and so on.

Twaddle, of course, but helpful to strong, hard men —

a leaven which lightens loneliness and danger. One must not begrudge the sailor his streak of sentimentalism. What but one manifestation of it is the rule of "women and children first"?

The conventionally labelled "sailors' songs" that are heard in the forecastle and at entertainments at seamen's institutes are a hodgepodge of the same kind of bathos that is current in up-to-date ditties along with a certain amount of genuine sea salt. The best of them deal with historic material, like the swinging, heaving ballad of the *Dreadnought*, a famous Western Ocean sail carrier that could be driven in heavy weather from here to hereafter.

Now the Dreadnought's a-howling down the wild Irish Sea,
Her passengers merry, with hearts full of glee;
Her sailors like lions walk the deck to and fro;
She's the Liverpool packet — O Lord, let her go!

Cardiff had a song, typical of the sort that sailors like, which he gave us in the second dogwatch one evening in the *Lethington*. I can still see his ruddy, boyish face shining out of the eerie shadows of the bunks behind as the light of our wobbling lamp fell intermittently upon him; I can hear his plaintive, slightly husky voice filling the forecastle. As I have never seen "The Faithful Sailor Boy" in print, I set it down in full as Cardiff sang it:

One dark and stormy winter's night,
The snow lay on the ground;
A sailor boy stood on the quay,
His ship was outward bound.
His sweetheart standing by his side
Shed many a bitter tear,
And as he pressed her to his breast
He whispered in her ear:

"Farewell, farewell, my own true love,
This parting gives me pain;
You'll be my own true guiding star
Till I return again.
My thoughts will be of you, my love,
When storms are raging high;
So farewell, love, remember me,
Your faithful sailor boy."

'Twas in a gale the ship set sail,
The lass was standing by;
She watched the vessel out of sight
Till tears bedimmed her eye.
She prayed to Him in Heaven above
To guide him on his way;
Her lover's parting words that night
Reechoed o'er the bay:

"Farewell, farewell, my own true love,
This parting gives me pain;
You'll be my own true guiding star
Till I return again.
My thoughts will be of you, my love,
When storms are raging high;
So farewell, love, remember me,
Your faithful sailor boy."

It's sad to say that ship returned
Without her sailor boy;
For he had died while out at sea,
And the flag flew half-mast high.
And when his shipmates came on shore,
And told her he was dead,
They gave to her a letter and
These last lines sadly read:

"Farewell, farewell, my own true love,
On earth we'll meet no more;
But I hope to meet in Heaven above
On that eternal shore.
I hope to meet you in that land,
That land beyond the sky,
Where never you'll be parted from
Your faithful sailor boy."

Mush, you say? You wouldn't have called it mush that night in the chill, leaky forecastle of a pitiful splinter of iron and wood, pounding through the loneliest stretch of ocean that rolls around the world. Mush? Well, what of it? It's what sailors like. It's what keeps them alive — and at sea.

The loneliest seas — so I have called those waters that roll around the world down below the Cape of Good Hope and the Horn. But all the seas are lonely except when one is traveling the North Atlantic lane, approaching a great port, or drawing near some narrow but much-used passage like the English Channel, the Strait of Gibraltar, or the Panama Canal. I wonder if the average transatlantic tourist has any conception of the isolation of a ship on other blue-water voyages. My recollection is that I saw only one vessel during the eight weeks' passage of the *Lethington* from the Cape Verde Islands to the coast of Australia. Certainly we passed only one close at hand, a bark near the Cape of Good Hope. I still recall how desolate she looked, her masts swinging, her yards banging, as she wallowed in the trough of a windless but heaving sea. No doubt we looked as forsaken to her.

In the six thousand miles of sea that we traversed between the Cape of Good Hope and Melbourne — a five weeks' journey — we saw no ships and sighted only one bit of land, if one may give that name to the hard, bare pile of stone that we saw gray and bleak in the distance one day about midway of the passage. St. Paul's Island is uninhabited except by sea birds, but the French Government, which has the doubtful honor of its ownership, maintains a shelter and store of provisions for any so luckless as to be shipwrecked there, yet so lucky as to reach alive the safety of those precipitous and unforgiving rocks.

The loneliness of these southern seas is accentuated by the monotonously troubled waters, the grim, gray obduracy of the skies, and the almost complete absence — or at least invisibility — of life other than that on shipboard. Elsewhere there is usually extraordinary variety at sea — sunshine or shower, clouds or cloudlessness, tempest or calm, enveloping fog or distant vision, sunset or sunrise, star dust or moonlight, color and motion, and an engrossing pageant of plant and animal life in the waters immediately about the ship. Nothing is quite so desolate or depressing — if one is in the mood to be depressed — as a nearly unchanging arc of steely, speechless sky over a valley of clashing waves obliterated at a distance of a mile or so in a drift of impalpable, mysterious mist.

There is one exception to the absence, or invisibility, of animal and vegetable life — the albatross. This great sea rover, never found — never even successfully acclimated — in the Northern Hemisphere, is the undisputed king of the skies that glower silently down upon the southern oceans. To me it is the grandest of all birds. I have seen the eagle on the wing in the land of which he is the symbol, I have seen the giant condor hovering over the Andes, but never have I seen anything in flight so majestic as the albatross soaring over its lonely seas. It seems to be chiefly a sky-spreading pair of wings — dark, mottled, or almost white — now beating slowly, rhythmically, as the albatross thrusts forward easily but at prodigious speed; now resting motionless as the bird volplanes through the sky or does a spectacular nose dive to the surface of the sea after a fish.

"I saw one caught," said Mick, "as measured twelve feet from one wing tip tuh the other. They don't look so big in the air, but spread out on deck they're thumpers."

"You saw one caught?"

"Sure; sailors catches 'em on windjammers — chuck a line overboard with a bit of bright-colored rag on a fishhook, 'n' a bird's liable to dive down 'n' snag hiself."

"I vouldn't neffer do t'at," said Peter soberly. "T'ey say it bring badt luck."

"Yes, they do say that," responded Mick. "I dunno ef it's right er not. Anyway, I never seen an albatross caught on a steamboat. I guess the noise scares 'em-like, though they dive down after food pretty close."

The albatross is the only bird of these distant seas, the sole creature of the air that can survive in these solitudes hundreds of miles from land. No flight seems to be too tiring for it — no weather too severe. It visits and raises its young upon the most remote bits of land — uninhabited mid-ocean rocks like St. Paul's Island. How, I wonder, does it find its way to a place where it can fold its wings and rest? When, if ever, does it sleep?

XIII

JOHN WHITE — A.B. — OF LIVERPOOL

All roads lead to Rome, sonny, so the sayin' goes:
But the long road, the salt road, the road a ship knows,
'Ull lead a man to the Bar Light afore his time is done —
An' I'll see you in Liverpool some day, my son!
— C. FOX SMITH

A FEW days before reaching Australian shores the first fight among the sailors took place. It was a miracle that we had kept the peace so long, for ours was distinctly a fighting ship and there had been dynamite in the forecastle since the night the crew had come aboard in New York. But there had been a good deal of mutual fear as well as individual pugnaciousness at the outset, which preserved an armed neutrality during those first days, while later the loss of Moore overboard and the common hardships of running the easting down had subdued the hostilities that had just missed flaming and crackling before we left the dock.

I suppose it was a reaction from the grim five weeks we spent between the Cape of Good Hope and Australia that made us quarrelsome. White's bucko ways had been resented all along by Cardiff and Diggle, the others of his watch, but Cardiff was a philosopher and Diggle a muttonhead. Besides, White was much the biggest man in the forecastle, and none of us was eager to make a personal test of the weight of his fists. We preferred to "let George do it."

As it turned out, it was Mick who did it — the smallest man among us. White criticized as unseamanly, in the presence of the rest of us, some piece of work which Mick had done. No taunt gets under an able-bodied sailor's skin like a charge of unseamanly work. It was none of White's business anyhow, as Mick was not in his watch.

"Red-headed jumpin' Judas!" sputtered Mick. "Who the roarin' flames uh hell called on *you* fer a speech?"

For answer White stepped smilingly forward and — Pam! Mick was sprawling on the forecastle floor, while White stood over him, kicking his head and shoulders.

"Git up! Go on git up," White shouted. "Git up an' I'll knock yuh down again. Git up, I tell yuh!"

Mick did not accept the invitation until White turned away and started to walk out of the door. Then the wiry little terrier jumped to his feet, struck the big fellow a couple of times in the head from behind, and darted back of the table for protection. White turned and came for him again. Very foolishly Mick seized a broken fork and called out, "Ef yuh touch me agin I'll stick yuh through the leg."

Very foolishly, I say, because it is always folly to use weapons in a fight unless one is prepared to kill or be killed, and if one is ready to go through with it he wants something better than a broken fork to work with. Mick realized his mistake himself when White picked up a sheath knife off a bench and, leaning across the table, roared out, "I'll fight yuh with knives. Come on, if yuh want t' fight with knives. I'll fight yuh!"

White was not smiling now. Rage quivered in his usually immobile face and glowed from his large, dark eyes. He stretched a huge arm over the table and brandished the sheath knife in Mick's face.

"Come on!" he shouted in hoarse high-pitched tones. "I'll cut yuh open like I'd cut a sheep."

Mick was terrified now and so were the rest of us, but fearful to intervene. Fortunately Mick's fear got the better of his anger. Realizing his danger, he shrank back into the bunk behind him, cowering before the knife which White was thrusting at him across the table.

"No, no!" cried Mick, his voice coming high in terror. "I don't wanta fight with knives. I don't wanta fight with knives."

White paused a moment, his face still flashing anger. Then it relaxed, and with half a grin, half a sneer, the big bucko walked out of the forecastle.

But Mick was not through. He was an odd mixture of caution and bravado. He never got so angry as to lose his head; he was a little fellow and he had learned that he couldn't afford to. Once started, though, he was a tenacious fighter, and in this instance he probably realized that his size made it no disgrace to be worsted by White, while it would be an achievement merely to be able to bedevil the forecastle's bad man for a while. So White had barely reached the deck when the pugnacious little Irishman followed him, picked up a big holystone (which had lain unused so far in the voyage), and went into action.

"Drop that stone," said Goliath, spoiling a repetition of the Bible story by wrenching away the considerable pebble before David could throw it. "'Aven't I given yuh enough?" And then to increase the measure, White sprawled Mick on the iron deck with a blow from a pile-driver of an arm and kicked him in the head with a pair of heavy boots.

Firemen off duty had come out of their forecastle, and quite a group was standing by. Mick rose from the deck presently — and went at it again.

"I'm not takin' water from you, yuh big bucko," he shouted, encouraged by the onlookers, and this time he dived into White with his fists. "Yuh can't come the bucko over me."

A couple of times Mick succeeded in planting some good blows on White's face, although after each attack he was knocked down on the iron deck and kicked. Fortunately White was no longer furious as before. The half smile, half sneer with which he had left the forecastle was still on his face, and he now pretended to treat Mick with the amused indifference that one would bestow upon the onslaughts of an enraged small boy. The third time that Mick rushed at White's face with clenched fists the latter ducked, and the Irish terrier went hurtling against an iron ladder leading to the forecastle head. It wasn't pleasant to see Mick kicked every time he went down, but sailors' ethics in this regard are liberal, and besides Mick had twice put himself in the wrong, first by threatening to use a fork and later by attempting to use a stone.

There was no more fight after this, but Mick had won an accepted victory by making himself the attacking party all the way after the first blow, and although his tough little body must have been badly thumped, the injuries were in spots where they could not be seen. On the other hand, Mick had succeeded in leaving some ugly bruises about White's nose and eyes which swelled from cold and exposure, making him the laughing stock of the vessel — when he was not within hearing.

On the seventy-fourth day out from New York, a passage of a little more than ten weeks, we took a tug up the Yarra River into Melbourne and, for the first time since leaving the Brooklyn dock, set foot again on firm earth. At least, the earth was firm until, after a few drinks of Colonial ale, it became even more wobbly and hard to tread than the most elusive seas.

I remember still the greeting of the tugboat's skipper as he hailed us at the river's mouth. It was so excellent a comment on the sturdy but shapeless tub in which we traveled.

"I sye, Captain," he bellowed, as he made ready to throw us a tow rope. "Whichever is your bow, anywye? I cawn't tell it from the bally starn."

We had an ungracious welcome to Melbourne by an old-time Australian dust storm. The newspapers said it was the worst that had visited the city in twenty-five years. I hope so, for it is one of those experiences which one is satisfied to undergo only once. It swept down over the harbor like a bank of yellow fog over the river Thames, blotting out all vision at a distance of more than fifty feet and blinding the eyes with flying particles. The fine, grimy dust eddied about one's head, with special attention to the neck and ears; it clogged the eyes, choked the nostrils, and worked its gritty way into the mouth; it whirled up the arms from the wrists and crawled down the spine from the coat collar. It penetrated every nook and corner, blowing all afternoon and nearly all night. To face the storm was impossible without closing the eyes; one had to turn his head or walk backward in order to make progress against it. Mick, who walked along the docks into the city, gave up the effort to return in the face of the storm, spending the night stretched out in the shelter of a friendly warehouse.

There was not a great deal of going ashore until Saturday night, because nobody had any money. Then twenty to twenty-five shillings apiece was distributed from accumulated wages, and the carnival began. As a passage man at a shilling a month, I was not favored with any ducats and I stayed aboard that night. Excepting Peter, who had been assigned as watchman and so didn't go ashore either, I was the only sober man in the crew within a couple of hours. Even before it was dark the donkeyman returned, money gone and head muddled.

"Giff me a handt, Yank, an' ve poot him in his bunk," said Peter. He knew from experience that his principal job that night would be to play nursery maid to helpless sailors, and he took his duties with characteristic seriousness.

We hoisted the donkeyman into his bunk, an upper one, but five minutes after Peter had gone back to his post at the head of the gangway there was a resounding thump and I found Donkey lying on the floor in a heap. I got him back in his bunk, but an hour later he heard the voice of the stowaway, who had just returned. Evidently they had had a quarrel a little earlier, and directly the donkeyman was out of his bunk again.

"Wot the bloody 'ell you come worryin' me fer?" asked Donkey belligerently, having climbed out of his bunk expressly to be worried. "Bli' me if I don't bash you cockeyed."

The stowaway was too befuddled to resist or even retreat. He held up his head accommodatingly, even confidingly.

"Hit me if you wan' to," he murmured thickly. "Here's my face, ri' here."

Donkey accepted the invitation joyfully but not efficiently. He pummelled with ardor, but was so limp and helpless that the shower of blows that rained upon the stowaway's face fell without danger or even appreciable discomfort.

The men returned by ones and twos until the next morning, all of them getting in finally except Mick and one of the firemen, whom the police cared for. I can still see Peter guiding those reeling figures up the gangway, tenderly leading them down the ladder to the main deck, and starting them toward the forecastle. Some time past midnight, after I had turned in and was trying to snatch a little sleep amid the hubbub of a drink-frenzied crew, Peter came into the forecastle with a scared face.

"T'e bo's'n iss lost. Coam help me fin' t'e bo's'n."

We got some lanterns and went out on the wharf, Peter explaining excitedly that the boatswain had returned, more or less unconscious, in a cab.

"I lift him out, an' t'e cab he drive away. Youst t'en a fireman coam back along t'e edge of t'e dock. I 'fraidt he get oferboardt tryin' to climb oop t'e gangvay, yaas. I leaf t'e bo's'n an' help t'e fireman oop t'e gangvay, yaas."

"W'en I coam back," continued Peter mournfully, "I can't findt t'e bo's'n anyveres. I'm 'fraidt he crawl avay an' fall off t'e dock."

Together we scanned the waters by the ship's side. Then we rummaged about amid the cargo on the wharf. All to no purpose. We were going back aboard, convinced that the boatswain had fallen off the wharf and gone to the bottom, when Peter stumbled over something.

"Yank, Yank!" I heard a few seconds later in an excited and exultant voice. "Coam here queek!"

Peter had stumbled over a foot and, looking closer, found curled up fast asleep in an empty packing box the missing boatswain.

From the racket on the fireman's side, I think every man must have had at least one fight with every other before the night was through. One man took his bag ashore and sold everything in it for money with which to buy more liquor. Another unpacked his bag and made a heap of the contents in the center of the forecastle. Our side was quieter. The last man in was Dougherty, and he didn't get quite in. He stumbled over the doorsill, lying there half in and half out until he came to in the morning.

Two weeks later we were in Sydney, on the east coast. Discipline had grown slack since we arrived in the Colonies. Liquor and shore leave are upsetting to sailors. Although there was a great deal then that needed to be done, we dallied with the work and our ablest drinkers, like Mick, Dougherty, and White, took to knocking off when no officer was looking to run up the street and have a pint. One afternoon we were all sent ashore to gather some pieces of sandstone for holystoning. We started a game of duck-on-a-rock and were having a joyous lark when the mate, returning from an errand in town passed by on the street right beside us. Whether he failed to recognize his bold British tars or thought it wiser to let the incident go unnoticed we didn't know, but we were never called to account.

I had planned to get my discharge in Sydney and, after staying a while in Australia, go on to New Zealand. But owing to a long period of drought — that implacable foe of the Never-Never Country — conditions in Australia were extremely bad. The sheep industry, the most important of the Commonwealth, was almost incredibly crippled. In the "back blocks" carcasses were rotting by the hundred along the roadsides, starved by the withering of the grass and scrub. In the cities wool exporters sat disconsolate, merchants daily dusted off wares for which there were no purchasers, business of all kinds languished, work was scarce, and wages dropped. Men drifted into the cities to get work when there wasn't enough to support those already there.

In Sydney hundreds of men were sleeping in the parks at night and picking up such a living as they could about the city by day. Walking through Pitt Street I spied two signs which were an ironical comment on conditions. One read: "Tools bought to any amount for cash"; the other: "Artificial teeth bought." When workers are driven to selling their tools, they are in a bad way, while a willingness to part with one's teeth carries the unpleasant suggestion of having so little occasion to use them that they are a superfluous possession.

All this didn't offer much encouragement to go ashore in a strange country, unskilled as I was in any trade, with empty pockets, without friends, and not possessed of any tools to sell or even any teeth save the unartificial and thus apparently unmarketable ones which nature had bestowed upon me. I decided to go on to New Zealand, where times were reported to be good, and to return for a bout with Australia when I had got more on my feet — or it had.

Our first port in New Zealand was Auckland, on the North Island, where the fighting spirit broke out again after the distribution of a few shillings of shore money and a renewed contact with Colonial ale. Peter, the patient, and Mick, the pugnacious, punched each other up one night for no reason that either of them could recall when they came to the next morning. The chief set-to, though, was between White and Dougherty. It aroused unprecedented interest, and, as the newspapers would put it nowadays, ringside seats were at a premium. White and Dougherty were regarded as the two best men aboard, certainly among the sailors. Each was cock of the walk in his own watch, and it had long been expected — and ardently hoped — that rivalries growing out of their respective positions would bring them together in a tussle. The event came to pass about supper time one evening when White, having been up the street for a few drinks, entered the forecastle and, laying aside his hat and coat, began to address the world in general.

"I'm the best man in this ship," he said in a loud voice, looking around with a challenge. "I can 'it the 'ardest blow an' I can stand the most punishment. I'm not braggin' but I know w'at I am, an' that's all there is about it."

He hit the table a savage whack and glared around the forecastle, a swagger in his broad, heavy shoulders, a curl of defiance on his lips. Then in a bellowing crescendo that resounded over all the forward part of the ship he concluded, "That's me! . . . John White! . . . A.B.! . . . *of Liverpool!*"

He whipped out the "of Liverpool" like the crack of a lash and, striding out on deck, invited any or all to dispute his boast. There were plenty of us standing around, but we seemed willing to let White's assertions pass as unanimous. Dougherty realized, though, that his prestige was menaced if he failed to respond, and more than half muddled himself, followed White to the deck.

"I don't mind havin' a go wid you, Mate," he said.

They stripped to the waist and went at it. It soon appeared that neither was in a condition for a first-class bout, but still they were capable of doing a good deal of damage to one another. They tumbled about on their bare backs on the iron deck, punching and kicking indiscriminately as the rest of the ship stood by in excited expectation. Finally White knocked Dougherty down beside the forward hatch coaming and, taking hold of a stanchion in order to balance himself, began to jump on Dougherty's head with a pair of hobnailed boots. That was too much for even a sailor's free and easy ideas.

"No, no!" said the boatswain, who had joined the circle. "Ye canna do that, ma lad."

White was dragged off and away by a group of the spectators, though not before he had so bruised Dougherty's scalp that the latter had to keep his bunk under a doctor's care for several days.

XIV

"ON THE BEACH" IN NEW ZEALAND

Patience is a virtue which is very apt to be fatigued by exercise.
— "TOM JONES"

I HAD been undecided whether to leave the *Lethington* in Auckland, which is near the north end of the North Island, or in Wellington, the capital, at the south end. An event which occurred the day before we were to sail determined me. Grumbling about the food had been renewed since we reached the Colonies. Rather than improving now that we were where fresh supplies could be bought, the fare had grown worse. To say nothing of quality, we had several times gone short in quantity as well. On the morning of which I write, the coffee had been too hopeless for even a "common sailor" to swallow, especially on a stomach upset by bad liquor. A sullen emotion of resentment passed through our little group in the forecastle, crystallizing in a common determination. It was the usually placid Peter, curiously, who first put it into words.

"No food, no vork," he observed glumly, leaving the breakfast untouched to whittle some pipe tobacco for a smoke instead.

"That's right," responded Cardiff. "We oughtn't none of us to turn to until we get somethin' fit fer a man to eat."

"An' I'm not a-goin' to," grunted Dougherty, as he swung himself up into his bunk. "I'm takin' me pew."

When the boatswain came forward to start the work for the day, Cardiff informed him of our decision.

"We can't work on this grub, Bose. We're layin' up until they give us somethin' we can eat."

On shipboard, if you are wise, you say you can't do a thing, not that you won't. By basing your decision upon inability rather than unwillingness, you help your position if matters come to a showdown.

"I dinna blame ye," said the boatswain quietly. There was complaint of the food aft as well as forward, and without stopping to argue the question he withdrew.

Previous experience had taught most of the men, though, that on an issue of this kind they usually lost, and there was no disposition to make a holiday of our freedom. Presently Peter turned toward his bunk and began to roll up his clothes.

"I'm goin' ofer t'e side," he explained briefly. Either the patience of the most patient man in the ship had run out, or else the old Viking urge of his ancestors was tugging at his insides, pulling him toward some new adventure.

"Most likely you're right too, Mate," said Cardiff. "A sailor al'ays loses, no matter how good a side he has."

"They can log us two days' pay for ivvry wan we lose an' make us pay the wages av a substitute besides," put in Dougherty, our sea lawyer.

"Vy not you coam too?" asked Peter of Cardiff.

For answer Cardiff rose thoughtfully from his bench, then turned quickly toward his bunk and began to pack up a small roll. The others in our forecastle resisted the contagion — for the moment at least. The veteran Dougherty, who had left many a pay day behind in his younger years, cared less now about adventure in new lands than about getting back to Liverpool with some money in his pockets; Diggle lacked the initiative or the imagination for a sudden move; Mick was too muddled with liquor from the night before to be interested in breakfast, work aboard, or life ashore; while White had sneaked down the gangplank before the trouble started to see if he could not induce somebody to give him a drink, and, not having returned, had presumably succeeded. So Peter and Cardiff, alone from our forecastle, but joined by several of the firemen, quit the ship.

I decided to go also, but not without the discharge to which, as a passage man, I was entitled. Without it, I knew I might have trouble in shipping out of New Zealand when I wanted to. In the absence of the captain I gave the mate the twenty-fours' notice which I had been warned might be exacted, and the next morning I went to the skipper to arrange a time for meeting him at the shipping office to receive my discharge.

"It's too late," he said. "We're going to sail at two o'clock."

That didn't affect me, I suggested, my twenty-four hours' notice having been given.

"You don't expect we're going to hold the ship here another day just for you, do you?" he inquired with fine sarcasm.

"That's exactly what I do expect, if it's necessary. You must admit that I'm entitled to my discharge."

"I admit nothing," he countered quickly, with true legal presence of mind.

"Wasn't it agreed that I was to have my discharge at a Colonial port of my own choosing?"

"I believe there was some talk to that effect," the skipper answered indifferently.

By that time I was through with amenities and dropped the rôle of humble suppliant which a captain expects when a "common sailor" appears before him.

"I want no more argument and no shinnanikin, you pie-faced old Bull of Barney," I retorted heatedly, stepping inside the door so that the skipper couldn't shut it on me. "Either you meet me at the shipping office or I'll go to the American consul and get the ship's clearance papers held up until you do."

This last thrust, I flattered myself, would bring him to terms. I flattered myself unduly. The skipper remained indifferent, so I left him and went ashore to carry out my threat. The American consul was interested and helpful. He sent his clerk with me to the shipping office to see the articles, they were spread out before us, and then I learned why the captain had treated my demands so lightly. It appeared that the clerk in New York, after promising to insert in the articles the necessary provision for my discharge in the Colonies, had failed — possibly at a hint from the mate — to do anything of the kind.

I was signed not for the passage, as agreed upon, but for a three years' voyage at a shilling a month to any part of the world between 70° North and 70° South.

I would get no discharge in Auckland or elsewhere in New Zealand.

It was then noon. The ship would leave the dock in two hours. I hurried back aboard, rolled a few essentials for the road in my blankets, and swung the bundle from my shoulders. The rest of my belongings I packed separately, so that I could leave them on storage at the Sailor's Home to be sent to me when I wanted them.

I shook each of my mates by the hand. The trouble of the day before had been smoothed out by an improvement — temporarily, at least — of the food, and the men had taken up their work again. They were in good humor and all practically sober, the last shore money having been spent at least twenty-four hours before.

I had an extra hearty handshake for Mick, who had befriended me all the way, often at some hazard to himself, merely because I happened to be one of a hundred million persons born somewhere within the same three million square miles of the earth's surface as he. I have always esteemed patriotism as among the lesser virtues. Why should the political subdivision known as a nation be more important or arouse more emotion than the political subdivision known as a city, or county, or state? Why should "my country" end at the Rio Grande or at 46°30′ North? Patriotism is not only "the last refuge of a scoundrel", as Doctor Johnson put it, but it is also the first resource of the sentimentalist, the quack, and the blockhead. We have reached a state in world progress when it can no longer enlist large devotion from great minds. Yet it has its place as a stepping stone toward the brotherhood of man. It is a limited and often a bloody religion, but there are times when I perceive its results to be rather fine. One of those times is when I think of Mick.

I left the forecastle with the goodwill and respect, I think, of all my mates, even of the tempestuous Dougherty who had been so anxious to pick a fight with me at the start. Certainly I bore away none but the warmest sentiments toward these tough-fibered, hard-bitten men whom in three months of the most intimate and constant association I had found loyal to the common enterprise upon which we were embarked — true to the harsh but just traditions of the sea.

"Better take some biscuit with you," suggested Mick. It was a good idea, and I slipped some in my bundle as a temporary check to starvation.

The officers were at dinner and the moment was opportune for departure, but in order to take no unnecessary chances I walked empty-handed down the gangplank amidships, while Mick hitched a rope to my dunnage and lowered it over the bow to the dock. There was a chorus of good wishes as I went.

"So long, Mate!"

"Hope the girls treat you right!"

"Don't drink too much shandy!" (Shandygaft is a mixture of beer and ginger ale much esteemed in the Colonies.)

"See you in Liverpool some day."

In any circumstances I should have gone ashore practically moneyless, but I had not expected to do so completely. Even at my nominal monthly stipend I was entitled to a few shillings, enough to buy me a bit of food until I could find employment. Besides, I had expected to get work in town to begin with, and preferably not to leave the ship until I had a job. As it was, I found myself without money and without work, "on the beach", as sailors say, with the need pressing upon me to get out of town as fast as possible, or otherwise I might be compelled to return to the *Lethington*.

I knew nothing of the country outside of Auckland, not even to what extent it was inhabited, but I had heard there were farmers in the region to the south, and as it was December, the beginning of the summer season in the antipodes, I judged that I could find work. Not having any other means of information, I visited the tourist office of Thomas Cook and Son. The manager must have thought from my dress and luggage (I was in my sailor's working clothes and carried my blanket roll swung from a rope over one shoulder) that I was one of the most remarkable tourists that had ever set foot in New Zealand. I remained as unconcerned as possible under his gaze and, after looking over all the free literature in sight, selected a small red book entitled, "New Zealand as a Tourist and Health Resort." Slipping it in a pocket, I asked the the manager the best route out of town to the southward.

"There's a train going in half an hour," he said politely.

"No-o-o. . . . I don't care for trains. They make me car sick. . . . How's the walking?"

"If you prefer to walk, you'd best take the shore road and follow it over the hill," came the answer with still unfailing politeness.

I bowed myself out with the most dignity I could muster and, traveling like the Apostles without scrip or purse, turned my back upon Auckland, my face toward the New Zealand bush.

At the top of the hill I paused for a glance ahead and behind. Before me reached a volcanic country with outcroppings of lava and a stunted verdure, unfriendly and uninviting. At my back lay the city and the docks, where the S.S. *Lethington* still clung, although the hour had gone when she was to have sailed. Were they holding her to look for me, I wondered?

Squat, ungainly, and unlovely, the ship was beginning already to twinkle in a golden haze of romance, as I thought of the memorable weeks I had passed in her once dingy (now glowing) forecastle. As I conned the cheerless country ahead of me my mind returned to the narrow bunk where I had slept, and the pebbly "donkey's breakfast" was transmuted into a feathery couch, symbolizing all the comforts of home. Those three meals a day which in common with my mates I had lately reviled now seemed the ideal of economic security. Even the armor-plated biscuit became succulent and appetizing. I wished I had put more of them in my bundle.

The haze of romance through which I viewed the *Lethington* from the heights outside of Auckland promises as these pages are written to envelop shortly most of these ugly ducklings of the deep which have been the world's cargo carriers during the past quarter of a century. For the tramp steamship is passing. Just as the ocean hobo, greater in carrying capacity and more reliable in its passages than the windjammer, made possible the miraculous increase in international trade which the twentieth century has witnessed, so that great augmentation of commerce is in its turn rendering obsolete the ocean hobo. Modern trade, imperial and imperious, is demanding larger, faster vessels, sailing at regular dates over fixed routes. The cargo liner is crowding out the tramp steamship. Out of every one hundred transoceanic steel steamships in 1914 there were forty-two tramps to every fifty-eight liners. By 1925 there were only twenty-seven tramps to seventy-three liners.

And as to-day we hail as an object of romance the square-rigged sailing ship — now that it has practically vanished from the seas — we shall in a not distant future be hymning the tramp steamship and trying to recall for a new generation the part which it played. For the going of the tramp means the final passing of the old sea and the ancient mariner, both of which, slightly wrenched, were carried over from the sailing ship. They can't withstand another moving. With the growth of the cargo liner the sailor's life is softer but less interesting. Going are the long, unknown voyages, taking one in a few years almost all over the world. In their place are coming shuttle services over fixed tracks, good for the family man but poor for the rover. The food is better, but the adventure less. There is increasing comfort but diminishing romance.

Of this, of course, I had no foreknowledge as I took my last look at the *Lethington*. But I did have that heaviness of heart which every sailor experiences when he quits a ship to which he has given any appreciable part of his life, even though he may have cursed the craft roundly in all his waking moments while aboard. C. Fox Smith has put it into verse:

"I come ashore off a Cardiff tramp — the
worst as ever I see:
She was all the things you could name," said Bill,
"as a ship's no right to be:

. . . .

"She rolled like a pig an' she steered like a
dray, she crawled like a bloomin' 'earse,
An' the things she done in a seaway,
Lord, they'd make a parson curse.

"But there I stood like a bloomin' fool on
the quay in the drippin' weather
An' looked at 'er, an' thought o' the things
us two 'ad seen together,

. . . .

"An' I spat in the dock, an' I turned to go with
a kind of a mist in my eye,
An' a fool of an ache in my fool of an 'eart
as I said, 'Ol' girl, good-bye!' "

How far I walked that afternoon I do not know; I went on until the town was lost behind and the houses were growing farther and farther apart. Then, in the gathering darkness, I sat down by the roadside and munched some of the sea biscuit that I carried with me from the *Lethington*. How good they tasted! Presently I spread my blankets under an evergreen tree and lay down to sleep.

I ought, I suppose, to have passed some restless hours before slumber came that night, wondering upon the folly that led me to go out penniless and alone into an unknown land fifteen thousand miles from home. In the interest of truth I am obliged to relate that neither regrets for the past nor fears for the future crossed my mind. For I was young and hopeful and unafraid. Against those, what can prevail?

So, after listening for a few moments to the cheerful tumult of the insects and the soothing murmur of the evergreens, I dropped off into oblivion until the chirping of a hundred birds waked me to the dawn of another day.

XV

"Cow Spanking"

Afoot and light-hearted I take the open road.
— Walt Whitman

I awoke in a new country. Under a sparkling sun I looked about me with a fresher eye and a higher heart than the evening before. For although I have written that I lay down to sleep without regrets for the past or fears for the future, it is also true that my first glimpse of the New Zealand countryside had not been reassuring to one tramping in search of work, and I imagine that exhaustion had as much to do with my untroubled sleep as peace of mind.

But morning brought a brighter prospect both within and without. In the distance I had walked after dusk, I had advanced into a more fertile and livable region. So after another meal of ship biscuit I set out on my way southward with renewed buoyancy.

As I went on, tilled fields and farmhouses began to appear. It was indeed a new country — new not merely to me but to itself. Most of the houses were of recent construction, and the fields had the half finished, untidy aspect of pioneer settlements. New Zealand spread itself before me as a land of barbed-wire fences and corrugated-iron roofs, and I soon made the acquaintance of the typical country house of the period, although I did not know then that I was to find it repeated over and over again during my travels: a one-story frame structure, usually painted a canary yellow, with a sheet-iron roof sloping at four angles from the center to the sides. Rain from the roofs, I learned later, was run into tanks, serving as the water supply for the home. Wells were rare and live stock depended mostly upon small streams.

Owing to my wish to put as considerable a distance as possible between me and the *Lethington* before coming to a stop, I made only a couple of casual inquiries for work in the course of the morning. Looking back on it now, I imagine my precautions were excessive. Pontius Pilate regarded me as a soldiering wastrel, not worth even my modest wage of a shilling a month. He was not likely to burn up the ground in pursuit, while the other officers probably had forgotten me already. Yet whenever I noted anybody approaching quickly from behind I conceived him to be an emissary bent on my arrest.

About midday I came to a comfortable old farmhouse near the road. A woman responded to my knock.

"Could I trouble you for a drink of water?" I asked.

"Wouldn't you rather have some milk?"

I would and I did. Then I put another question, "Do you know anybody around here who wants to hire a man?"

"Can you milk?" she inquired immediately.

I had not done any milking since I was fourteen years old, and not a great deal before then, but I was quite prepared to go at it.

"There are mighty few jobs on a farm that I do better," I answered cheerily, a true statement if taken literally — which I did not intend it should be.

"There's a place about a mile from here, at the top of the first road to the left. They wanted somebody there a few days ago, mostly for the milking. Maybe they do still."

It was off the main road, but as I wasn't enthusiastic about another meal of hard-tack I decided to call there and at least obtain a dinner.

At the time I did not remark especially the question that had been put to me in regard to milking, but I was to learn its importance. I found it to be the first and pretty nearly the only question asked of an applicant for farm work on the North Island of New Zealand. The dairy industry had had been growing tremendously there within the last few years, and any one who was a fair hand at "cow spanking" could get work anywhere during the summer. The difficulty of getting help was so great, indeed, that although Colonial women did not usually do farm work, I found that both they and all available children commonly lent a hand with the milking.

"I'm looking for work," I said at the door of the farmhouse to which I had been directed. "I heard you wanted somebody here."

A plea for work is always a good beginning. It makes a favorable impression, although at the moment I was more interested in a square meal than in the pleasantest kind of toil ever devised. A kindly faced, white-whiskered man well on in years looked me over carefully.

"Supposing you wait a minute and see my son; he has the active management of the place. He'll be in to dinner any time now."

The roll swung from my shoulder drew no comment, nor had it done so anywhere along the road. "Swag men", so called from the fact that they carried their belongings, or swag, with them, abounded in the antipodes. In a new country, with a large demand for migratory labor, this was the customary way for men to look for work. There was, I discovered, a somewhat vague distinction between a "swagger" — a bona fide workingman — and a "sundowner", the latter corresponding more nearly to our professional tramp and getting the name from a tendency to arrive with a request for food and lodging at sundown, too late to do any work in return. A man's swag was sometimes spoken of as his "bluey", from the prevailing color of the blanket in which it was carried, and in Australia a man who traveled in this way was said to be "humping bluey", or "on the wallaby", this last referring to the uncertain wanderings of an animal bearing that name which is a relative of the kangaroo.

I sat down on the porch to await the arrival of the son who was in charge of the farm, and was just wondering if the psychological moment hadn't arrived to hint that some dinner would be acceptable when a spry, energetic-looking woman of mature years appeared at the door. She was, I learned later, Mrs. High, the wife of the man to whom I had just been talking.

"Would you care for a plate of soup?"

"I had a late and hearty breakfast," I answered as confidently as I could, considering that my stomach had long since caved in on the four sea biscuit which I had eaten at about 5 A.M. "Still a taste of soup wouldn't go badly now, if it isn't too much trouble."

My expectation was that some soup would be thrust out the window in a tin basin with a crust of bread. Instead, after several minutes' wait and a gnawing fear on my part that I had feigned too great indifference, Mrs. High returned to the door.

"Will you come in?" she asked.

I followed her into the kitchen and was dumbfounded to find one end of a table laid for me with a snow-white cloth, chinaware, and silver knives, forks, and spoons. For the first time in more than three months I had soup made of fresh meat and tea with milk in it. There was an unlimited supply of fresh bread and as much butter as was served to the entire forecastle of the *Lethington* as a week's allowance. An entire jar of jam was set before me with no apparent fear that I would eat too much.

After dinner Mr. High's son had a talk with me.

"Where have you been working?"

"I just came off a ship."

"O-o-oh? . . . Run away?"

I hesitated a second. "Well, you see . . . "

"Most of them do," he broke in. "We see a good many of them here — so near to Auckland. . . . There isn't much to do now except the milking. I've got a harvesting machine and shall be gone all day for the next few weeks, cutting grain for neighbors. What I want most is some one to take over the cows. We're milking only ten."

Only ten! I winced within but tried to keep my face impassive. As nearly as I could recollect, I had once milked as many as four.

"What do you say to starting in at twelve bob a week and all found?" young Mr. High asked finally.

"I wouldn't care to take the job for so little," I replied, a trifle rashly, perhaps, for one who was on the road penniless and knew little about farm work besides. "I understand the usual pay is a pound a week."

"Not around here. Fifteen shillings is about the highest. I'll give you that."

In Colonial slang I had landed on a "cockatoo farm". That did not mean a farm on which they raised cockatoos; the term was used to distinguish a small holding from a big estate. Under New Zealand's radical land and tax laws — intended to make difficult the retention of large unworked tracts and to help men of little capital to obtain and cultivate small farms — many humble holdings had been newly settled. The farm laborer of intelligence and enterprise worked for others only long enough to accumulate a hundred or so pounds and then went on the land for himself. Unlike the tendency in most other parts of the world for the population to gravitate toward the cities, the movement was rather the reverse. Politically and economically the country ruled the city, not the city the country.

Although a "cockatoo farm" in popular designation, the Highs' place was not newly settled. On the contrary, the house was an old-fashioned one surrounded by some fine, big shade trees. The barn and a number of other outbuildings were near by, in one of the latter of which a room was provided for me.

The only drawbacks were the fleas and the milking. The former I found in droves all over New Zealand, but either they were thicker here than at any other place where I stopped, or I became hardened to them later, for they didn't bother me as much at any subsequent time as during those first few weeks. My motto is "Live and let live", and in reasonable numbers fleas do not molest me nor I them. But I like a little of my skin to myself, a privilege I was not permitted to enjoy at the Highs'.

After the first week or so I sometimes milked all ten of the cows at night, but usually only half the number in the morning. Even for an indifferent milker like myself this would not have been bad — but for the fact that the cows were.

"You'd better use a tie-rope on that one," said young Mr. High, of the first cow that I made ready to milk. "If you don't she might happen to kick you through the barn wall — and the boards are kind of rough."

I soon found "that one" meant every one. For all-around kicking efficiency the herd would have put to shame the most ornery convocation of Georgia mules ever assembled. The only safety lay in pulling back one hind leg with a tie-rope and hitching it to a stanchion. Even so, I was likely to be kicked while doing it, and one dod-blasted old virago tried to kick with her free hind leg and fell in a heap on my milk bucket. Donkeys are traditionally thought to be stupid, but cows are often much more so.

"It's an odd lot, this herd, picked up at auctions and mostly cast-offs from other barns," explained young Mr. High apologetically. "They're not all as sweet-tempered as they might be, and it's as hard to get milk out of some of them as shillings out of a Scotchman."

It was. In fact, I didn't regularly milk a cow that deserved to be handled with anything less powerful than a steam pump.

My fingers began to cramp at night so that when I turned out in the morning they were as stiff and inflexible as if they had been frozen. I had to soak them in piping hot water and put them through a series of limbering-up exercises before I could begin milking.

In spite of the fleas and the milking, I counted myself lucky to have fallen in such good hands as those of the Highs. Young Mr. High, as I have already explained, was away most of the time, cutting grain for neighbors. So long as I was to be relied upon for the heavy end of the milking and the other morning and evening chores, he did not care if I didn't bestir myself greatly during the rest of the day. Neither did I. The other members of the family did not attempt to boss me in the absence of the son, although Mrs. High would sometimes ask me to do some little job for her. In addition to her energy for work she had a passion for song — in no way equalled, I regret to add, by capacity. There was one popular ditty of the day for which she had a special liking, and I often chuckled when the kitchen door banged and she bustled outside on some errand, singing as blithely as a lark and as tunelessly as a frog, "Every morn I bring thee violets."

Besides Mr. and Mrs. High and their grown-up son there was another member of the family: a just-enough-grown-up daughter, Pearl. It was not long, in fact, before Pearl became the most important member of the family for me. She was a fair-haired girl with a lovely English complexion of rose and white. Her eyes were the color of forget-me-nots, when they were quiet, and like the flash of a bluebird on the wing when they snapped with laughter or animation. This may sound unduly poetical, but it is intended to reflect my feelings on the subject at the time as I recall them.

Around the farm Pearl was a healthy, husky country girl, but the aristocratic blood which I suspected ran in the family bubbled out when from time to time she dressed up to go into Auckland by train. Then the country girl became a sophisticated and fashionably gowned young lady who left me a little wistful as I puttered around the farm in my old clothes.

She called me by my first name, as the rest of the family did, but I called her Miss Pearl — as the rest of the family did in speaking of her to me.

"Don't you find it lonely at sea?" she asked one day, after I had been on the farm a couple of weeks.

"Not as lonely as I find it on land," I responded, for, oddly enough, my first sensation upon coming ashore after three months at sea was of loneliness.

She laughed. "Why, what ever do you mean? At sea you are away from all the rest of the world."

"Yes, you are away from the rest of the world, but you always have companionship. You can't get away from it night or day, even if you want to."

The abrupt change made it lonely for me, especially in the evenings. Sometimes I caught myself actually wishing for the rumble of the elevated-railway trains under my windows in New York.

"You say at sea one is away from all the rest of the world," I continued presently. "Now that's just the way I feel about New Zealand. At sea one isn't out of the world. There's no place where one's so much in it. One is knocking around it and visiting its every part all the time. They talk about the Farthest North or the Farthest South. Well, to me New Zealand seems like the Farthest Off — from everywhere."

Pearl received this with surprise. "That's funny. I never thought of it that way. It's my home."

"Sure it is. You were born here and have lived here all your life. But to me it seems the most out-of-the-way place in all the world. It's away from everywhere."

"I don't see why one place is more out of the way than another. It depends on where you start from, doesn't it?"

"There's no answer to that," I responded, attempting one just the same, "except that I didn't start in New Zealand. For the first time in my life I can understand how out of the world America must seem to a person brought up in Europe. And it must have been even more so to the early settlers."

At meal times I ate by myself in the kitchen, not with the family in the dining room. This, I think, was unusual. In the average farmhouse the hired help ate with the family, just as it does pretty generally in the northern part of the United States to this day. The arrangement did not displease me, though. It gave me, as well as the family, a certain appreciated freedom, while in so far as food went, I probably fared better than if I had eaten with the rest. Pearl, who did most of the cooking — and she was a skilled performer on the stove — used to make frequent sallies into the kitchen in the course of the meals, quite as much, I had the effrontery to believe, in order to heap up my plate as to get supplies for the family, while a good many titbits and extras must have come my way that could not decently have been bestowed upon me if I had been eating with the rest.

Well — that is as may be. Perhaps I flatter myself. Anyhow, I was well satisfied, and I made up for three months of rude fare in the *Lethington* by stowing away enough victuals at the Highs' to feed a boys' camp. Luckily I did not stay the summer through, for I must have gathered flesh with the rapidity that a snowball takes on fresh layers, and had I remained until autumn at the Highs' they would have had to call in the neighbors to help roll me off the premises.

The Highs' place could hardly have been a success as a farm. The milk was about the only regular source of profit, and although there was a little fruit and some land in hay and grain, everything was run in such a careless, happy-go-lucky fashion that the farm must have been a source of expense rather than income.

Nothing was ever put away. It was simply left where it happened to be when the work in hand was finished. Whenever I saw Mr. High pick up anything that I had to use in the daily work, I got in the habit of noting carefully where he went, so that I would know where to look afterward. One day I picked up a brand-new milk pail in a pasture. (They call it a paddock in New Zealand.) That is, it had been brand new before several days of rain had beaten upon and rusted it.

In cleaning up about the barn I found a dead hen under a box. I decided it must have been put there temporarily awaiting burial, but thought best to mention the matter to Mrs. High, who took care of the chickens. Her face clouded at once.

"Oh, that's my bad memory again," she said in a voice full of agitation. "The poor hen! I put her under there to set two weeks ago, and forgot all about her. Poor thing!"

Upon returning one evening from the village, Mr. High left Tommy, one of the horses, harnessed to the cart, went into the house, and presently forgot about him. Nobody else remarked the oversight unless it was Tommy, and in time everybody went to bed. During the night a steady, cold rain set in, and in the morning Tommy was found still harnessed to the cart, which he had dragged over flower beds and shrubs into a tree-grown corner, where he had managed to get halfway under an evergreen and pass the night as philosophically as possible. Mrs. High was away at the time, and upon her return I rather carelessly related Tommy's adventure. Mr. High heard me from an adjoining room.

"What are you talking about?" he called out, cross for the only time that I recall. "Why, I unharnessed Tommy and turned him out in the paddock myself."

As a matter of fact he had — the next morning. Later in the day he inquired of me apologetically, "Who told you about Tommy, anyway?"

"Miss Pearl did."

"O-oh, Miss Pearlie did, did she?" His daughter was a great favorite with him, and he broke into a smile at once. "You see, Tommy is Mrs. High's horse, and I didn't want her to know even that I'd been driving him."

Ungracious on my part as it may seem, Pearl was not the only magnet for me in the neighborhood. There was Jennie Burnham, who lived with her widowed mother on the adjoining farm. Jennie came over on horseback one afternoon, riding astride, according to the fashion in New Zealand even then, although the custom was not adopted in America until some years later. Jennie managed her horse well and herself still better upon it. She was what by courtesy is called buxom — meaning fat — but any one who remarked her well would realize that there was not a soft, mushy ounce upon her. She was solid as a billiard ball, with large dark eyes and a swarthy complexion suffused with red from underneath.

"Jennie lives alone with her mother," Mrs. High told me later. "The two of them do all the work on their farm."

"Jennie looks pretty husky," I returned.

"Pretty husky? Jennie is as good as two men. She milks all of the nine cows, morning and night."

She milked nine cows! That was enough to deify any girl in my imagination. And did she, I wondered, have to tie the off hind leg of each, in order not to be kicked through the barn walls, the boards of which, like those at the Highs', might be annoyingly rough?

Obviously I couldn't but admire Jennie, and I surmised that, like Pearl, she had something of a fancy for me. Possibly that was mere masculine presumption — in both cases. The fancy may have been mine rather than Jennie's — or Pearl's.

I didn't see much of Jennie. Although I was free to do a reasonable amount of loafing around the Highs' place during the day, I didn't feel entitled to wander off to a neighbor's farm to do it. I wasn't commissioned as a visiting loafer. Besides, there was the difficulty of thinking up a suitable errand. That barred Sundays entirely. A call on Sunday was too obviously a social visit — which I hadn't been invited to make, in spite of the fancy which I have alleged Jennie had for me. Perhaps Jennie would not have objected to the informality. But there was her mother. . . .

As to evenings — well, I didn't get through any too early myself, and I thought of those nine cows and didn't know how to time my arrival after the milking was done but before Jennie had gone to bed. To arrive before the milking was done would never do. No gentleman could hang around and watch a lady milk. Yet to match my skill against that of a young woman who regarded the regular milking of nine cows as a mere setting-up exercise would not give me that superiority which every male seeks as a means of impressing the other sex. Almost my only claim to excellence in "cow spanking" was a flow of language, and I wasn't sure that I could use that to any advantage in the presence of a lady.

Occasionally I trumped up an excuse to borrow some tool or other at the Burnhams' — that's an easy subterfuge on a farm — but I seemed always to encounter the mother. Jennie would be off in the fields riding a mowing machine or otherwise busy as a farmer. There was a moment when I seemed to be on the way to greater progress. I suggested to Mrs. High, who had asked me to sharpen some knives, that to put an edge on them I needed an oilstone; I thought they had one at the Burnhams'; I might take the knives over and sharpen them.

Luck was with me. I found Jennie just outside the house and, yes, they had an oilstone. "It's out in the shed. I'll show you."

She did and was tripping away when I thought to say, "What's your hurry?" or something equally inconsequential and yet of sufficient impact to detain anybody who wanted to be detained. (What insufferable masculine conceit, I hear some feminine readers exclaiming at this point — not unjustly.)

"There's always so much to do," she retorted, with an originality comparable to my own.

"Yes, and always will be. You'd better stay and do it here."

I squatted down on the floor, with the oilstone between my knees, and began to sharpen the knives. She poised for a moment above me and then sat down opposite — and not far away. Her arms were bare, brown, and good to look upon. I wondered if the rest of her was equally solid and shapely.

She said, "Do you like it at the Highs'?"

I said, "Sure I do. They treat me fine."

She said, "How do you like New Zealand?"

I said, "First rate, what I know of it. I haven't seen anything but the little stretch between here and Auckland."

She said, "It must be a lot different here from what it is at sea."

I said, "Yes, it is a lot different."

She said and I said a few more inconsequential nothings like that. But in those means of communication which are older and subtler and more important than language we were meanwhile making better progress. We were not, in fact, thinking of the Highs or New Zealand or any of the other subjects with which our tongues were wagging, but of that always thrilling discovery between a man and a woman that they like each other and find it good to be together. And thus all was going well until a call broke in upon us.

"Jen-ni-e-e-e!" It was her mother's voice floating out from the house.

Jennie looked into her lap and pretended not to hear.

"Jen-ni-e-e-e!" The voice, nearer and more vibrant, was obviously approaching the shed. It could no longer safely be ignored.

"Ye-e-s, I'm coming."

Jennie scrambled to her feet, gave me a flash of disappointment from her eyes, and disappeared out the shed door. I finished the knives hurriedly — I fear even carelessly — and left without seeing Jennie again.

I have never seen her since.

After all, it must have been Pearl that I liked best, for it was of her that I thought chiefly in the week or so longer that I remained with the Highs. A young man with a hearty appetite who has just spent three months on the fare of a tramp steamship can hardly fail to be impressed by a girl with a rose-and-white complexion and eyes like forget-me-nots who feeds him lavishly and well three times a day. No, not even if she doesn't have a rose-and-white complexion and eyes like forget-me-nots.

The opportunities for communication with Pearl were better than with Jennie. And opportunity has a great deal to do with the development and direction of the affections. It ought not to have and we like to pretend that it hasn't. We like to pretend that love laughs at locksmiths and battles triumphantly against all obstacles. Sometimes it does — if it is lasting enough and has the strength. But strength is not given to all in this world nor are the early sex gropings between a man and woman often lasting. Curiosity and wonder are commonly the chief spurs, and if the blood grows hot at the moment it cools as easily a moment later.

Not only did Pearl and I have an opportunity for a friendly word and glance at meal times thrice every day, but when I was working — or pretending to work — in the neighborhood of the house we frequently found a chance for meetings, more or less extended according to whether any one else happened to be around.

"What are you doing there?" she inquired carelessly one afternoon, when I had seated myself conveniently and conspicuously close to the house and was feigning great industry in the repair of some ropes.

"I'm making a long splice," I replied, with I dare say a touch of self-importance. I was fond of doing seamanly jobs when no other work was pressing — sometimes when it was. Such occupation gave me a chance to sit in the shade near the house and squander time pleasantly on accomplishments that looked ingenious and enterprising even if not of the least necessity or value.

"Oh, that's some of your sailor work, isn't it? I wish I knew how to do things like that."

To this there was only one possible answer, and I made it, "Sit down and I'll show you."

She sat. We both sat . . . and talked . . . and sat . . . and talked . . . of many things. . . . We made famous progress, although perhaps not in the direction of repairing rope. We might have been there yet if young Mr. High had not unexpectedly appeared.

"I'm . . . I'm learning . . . how to make . . . a long splice," Pearl stammered, coming out of the trance with the greater quickness that women usually manifest on such occasions. She did not have the presence of mind, though, to sit where she was, and her face was rosier and whiter than usual as she jumped to her feet.

"Ye-es," said young Mr. High, "I see."

He saw altogether too well. I tried to look unconcerned, doubtless blushing more obviously than Pearl in the effort. The brother was seemingly more embarrassed than either of us.

"It's easy to make a short splice, but a long one is harder," put in Pearl to fill the pause.

"Do you find it so?" he queried, and as Pearl hurried away toward the house, he turned to me apologetically. "I just wanted you to help me a minute down at the barn."

We didn't make either a short or a long splice, Pearl and I. I had ties, interests, ambitions on the other side of the world, while Pearl doubtless had equally good reasons for not wishing indefinitely to cook three times a day for so robust an appetite as mine — among others, perhaps, a natural desire to fly higher than a "common sailor", or her brother's hired man. For me, too, there was safety in numbers — I am thinking of Jennie — while for aught I know Pearl was as well or better protected.

I became restless to swing my swag from my shoulder and take the road again. Little use as I had been on the farm in my own estimation, the Highs didn't want me to go. They offered me better wages and other inducements, every member of the family exhausting his persuasive powers in trying to get me to remain through the summer. Every member except Pearl. There was nothing she could say but good-by. She said it while I was still at breakfast in the kitchen on the morning of my departure, for she was going in to Auckland that day and had to hurry off to catch a train. She was dressed for the city, looking her best and smartest. There was a quick handshake between us, and a smile flashed across the rose and white of her face and lit up the eyes which I have already described as of the blue of forget-me-nots. Yes, I stick by that to the last.

"I wish you the best of luck," she said gaily, and fluttered to the door.

"I wish you the same, Miss Pearl," I called out at her retreating figure. . . .

I wish it still.

Mrs. High's parting was characteristic.

"I don't want to be nasty and hope you'll break down on the road," she said, as we shook hands, "but if you do, why come right back."

XVI

SWAG MAN

The bed was made, the room was fit,
By punctual eve the stars were lit;
The air was still, the water ran,
No need was there for maid or man,
When we put up, my ass and I,
At God's green caravanserie.
— ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

FROM the Highs' I took the road south toward Mercer. My destination was Wellington, but I expected to make a detour to the east to have a look at the gold fields, stopping for a few weeks to try my hand if a chance offered.

I had three pounds and fifteen shillings in my pockets, the entire wages of five weeks' work, for there was no place within convenient walking distance of the Highs' where I could spend any money, and I had not drawn a penny up to the time of my departure. I might, therefore, have traveled by railway, but the route to the gold fields was roundabout and I thought I could take a shorter one on foot, covering the distance in a couple of days and saving my fare. On the map with which I had provided myself there appeared to be a road from Mercer in the right direction.

As signs of rain began to show themselves late in the afternoon, I realized that sleeping in the open would not be pleasant and began to look about for shelter. The winters are not cold in the region around Auckland. There are only occasional frosts and it is not necessary to provide live stock with protection. This means a scarcity of barns, sheds, haystacks, and other convenient places such as our farms boast, where a night's lodging may be had without disturbing the family. There is no country like the good old U.S.A. for traveling comforts.

Upon coming at last to a farm with a number of likely looking outbuildings, I thought to stretch my blankets in one of them and myself on the blankets. But as the buildings were all within plain sight of the house, it seemed necessary to ask permission there first.

"Do you mind if I turn in for the night in one of your sheds?" The question was addressed to a man who had responded to my knock and stood eyeing me through about four inches of open door.

"That's not allowed here." The answer was in a surly voice, with a motion toward closing the door. But I had made up my mind that this was the place for me to spend the night, and having done so, it is always well to be firm. If you allow yourself to be discouraged by your prospective host's lack of cordiality, you will bang about the road all day without food and all night without a place to lay your head. The only way to make tramping tolerable is to decide where you want your meals and where you want to sleep, and then insist upon your rights.

Believer, as I was, in the "open door" policy, I placed one foot resolutely athwart the threshold and renewed the pourparler.

"It's already getting dark and it's raining besides," I explained. "I can't look any farther and I can't sleep outside. The loan of a few feet of your woodshed floor won't cost you anything."

In I trust a courteous but unyielding manner I made it clear that I intended to stop for the night and that was all there was about it.

"Well," said the surly voice finally, "you can go up in that hay loft yonder. See that you don't get to smoking and set it afire."

There was no offer of food, but as I had had a hearty midday dinner at the Highs' before taking the road I wasn't especially hungry. I decided to reserve my attack upon the kitchen until morning and — I hoped — a more hospitable member of the household.

I soon found that I was not the only one spending the night in the hay loft. There were also two hundred and eight mosquitoes (exact statistics, I find, carry conviction), all hearty eaters, all sleepless, all tireless in their energy. It was a satire to speak of what I was lying upon as hay. The grass had been overrun with blackberry vines, and every time I turned a briar announced itself in a new part of my body. The air in the hay loft was too warm and muggy for me to want any covering, but to protect myself from the mosquitoes I had to wrap myself, head and all, in one of my blankets. After lying this way for five or six minutes I would thrust aside the blanket, wave my hands about my face while taking a few breaths of air, and then muffle myself up again, repeating the technique at intervals until morning. My sleep — need I add? — was what the novelists would describe as troubled and I myself would record as merry hell, were the expression not a coarse one.

As soon as I discerned any life stirring about the farm I climbed down from my perch and went toward the house. It was still drizzling and muggy. I felt as dismal inside as everything looked outside. Or perhaps everything looked as dismal outside as I felt inside. I leave that to the psychologists to settle. I thought of Mulciber, who, thrown out of heaven, fell all the way to earth without benefit of parachute. Only that

> from morn
> To noon he fell, from noon to dewy eve,

while I felt as if I had fallen from eve to midnight, from midnight to dewy morn. En route my stomach seemed to have dropped out, leaving a raw and uneasy cave within me. And upon what an earth I had fallen this soggy, sultry morning!

Near the house I came upon a young man, evidently a son of the old codger I had encountered the night before, but a different kind of host altogether.

"How did you make out?" he asked genially.

"Nothing to brag about," I replied with hardly equal cordiality, "but the mosquitoes made out splendidly. At least two hundred and eight of them ought to be fat enough to send to market without further feeding."

He laughed. "So the mosquitoes took a nip at you, did they?"

"There are a few spots they didn't blister — those where the blackberry vines beat them to it." Then I added, less grumpily, "Maybe there is a bit of work about the place I can do in return for my breakfast."

"Oh, we'll give you your breakfast all right," he came back with a laugh. "You needn't bother about work. Sit down and read the paper." He pointed to a chair on the back porch.

Surprised and considerably revived already, I did as he suggested. Presently a woman brought me a pitcher of milk and some bread. My young host eyed it with disfavor.

"That's nothing for a wet morning," he commented, and carried the food back to the kitchen, reappearing shortly with a cup of tea and some hot buttered toast.

All that day in a steady drizzle I tramped uphill and down on the road to Mercer. I had six pieces of hard-tack with me, the last of my store from the *Lethington.* I made my lunch off four of them while walking, but upon reaching Mercer that night went to the hotel and spent my money like a man, glad of a chance to exchange it for a hot supper, a bath, and a refreshing sleep.

I had expected to get full information in Mercer in regard to my route to the gold fields, but I found either ignorance or conflicting opinions. I learned, though, that I should have to cross the head waters of Hauraki Gulf.

"There's no bridge," one informant told me, "but I think there's a boat that'll take you across."

So after an early breakfast I set out as briskly as I could travel with a ten-pound swag swung from my shoulders. There was little hitch-hiking in the New Zealand of that day. At least, although the opportunity for hiking was generous, there was a niggardly shortage of hitching. The automobile had not yet come into general use and there was little travel on the roads, that usually by horseback unless one had a load to carry.

The road I followed soon lost itself in a bridle path through as dreary a stretch of country as I had ever seen. No trees or grass — only a stunted growth of scrub sprawling over reddish-yellow clay. No houses in sight, no passers-by on the road — nothing but a dismal succession of rolling hills with swamps in the valleys between. The drizzle of the day before was gone but not the sultriness. The sun beat down mercilessly and there was no running water anywhere. Fortunately the rain had filled gullies in the clay with fresh water, and I gulped refreshment from these until the sun dried them up.

Dreary as the landscape was, the walk had a certain interest for me, as it led through one of the largest gum-digging regions south of Auckland, although so much worked over that it had then ceased to be of much value. Gum digging is an industry even more peculiar to New Zealand than gum chewing to the United States. But it is not the same kind of gum. The gum of New Zealand is what is left of the once magnificent forests of kauri pine. The trees had been butchered for timber many years before my visit, not even the stumps or roots remaining. But the juices that had dripped from the trees still lay buried a little below the surface of the ground, forming a unique and valuable export because of its value for varnish.

Since arriving in New Zealand I had become interested in gum digging and had considered trying it myself, but young Mr. High dissuaded me.

"It wouldn't be worth while unless you expected to stick at it for some time," he cautioned. "In the early days of gum digging some men struck it pretty rich; it was as good as panning out gold. But the gum fields have been pretty well scratched over by now.

"The best gum diggers are the Maoris." He referred to the New Zealand natives. The word Maori is pronounced to rhyme with "dowry." "They turn up a few spades full of the surface in a likely looking spot, pierce the soil below with a sharp spear, then pull out the spear and look at the point for signs of gum. It takes a good deal of practice to know where to look. You've got to buy an outfit and put up a *whare* [the Maori word for shack] to live in while you're at work. It would cost you considerable to make a start, and an inexperienced person wouldn't earn anything out of it until after several months at best."

Now that I was in the midst of a gum field, and saw what a cheerless, lonely waste it was, I was glad I had not sought experience as a digger.

Toward the middle of the afternoon, when I was thinking I must have covered most of the twenty miles to Hauraki Gulf, I met a fellow traveler, the first and only one during the day. He came from the direction in which I was going and was on horseback.

"I've just come from the Gulf," he said, looking rather mystified when I told him what I was hoping to do. "The boat was leaving when I came away."

I, hopefully, "Will there be another boat to-morrow?"

He, discouragingly, "No, there won't be another for a week."

I, doubtfully, "Is there some other way to get across or around the head of the Gulf?"

He, decisively, "No, there's no other way to get across, and there's nobody living there to take you in; you better go back."

He clucked to his horse and rode on briskly, easily, over the path I had covered laboriously and, as it now appeared, futilely. Worse than futilely, in fact, as I was under the necessity of retracing my course. The afternoon was already half gone; I was tired; I should rather have gone on into a lion's den than return over the miserable path by which I had come. Unfortunately there was nothing so exciting as a lion's den ahead — merely more of a region of which I had already seen too much, with nothing to eat, nothing to drink, and no place to stay.

After three days I was practically as far from the gold fields as when I left the Highs'. I should have to go by train, after all. But it was Saturday and there were no Sunday trains in that region. I should have to wait until Monday even to make another start.

About nine o'clock that night I was back in Mercer. Dragging my feet like ingots of pig iron toward the railway station, I accosted the man in charge.

"Is there another train out to-night?"

"Where to?"

"Anywhere; I don't give a hang."

"The last train of the week will be along in a few minutes for Frankton."

I revealed my hoped-for destination and learned that by going to Frankton I might tramp a stretch on Sunday and so catch a train for the gold fields on another line of the railway early Monday morning.

A few minutes later I climbed wearily into a railway carriage, and recollecting that I hadn't eaten since breakfast, I ransacked my swag, pulling out the last of my store of hard-tack from the good ship *Lethington*. The store now consisted of two painfully dirty-looking crackers. Breaking one of them into bits as we rolled southward, I called it supper.

Midnight and Frankton! Raining again! I stumbled off the train and went in search of a boarding house. I pounded on the doors of several, but either they were closed for the night or I was told there was no accommodation. Disgusted, I returned to the railway station, now closed and dark. Spreading my blankets on the flooring of the open but roofed shed, I lay down and at once fell sound asleep.

Up again with the sun and ravenously hungry. No place open at which to get anything to eat and — as it was

Sunday — no prospect of anything in less than two or three hours. So I ate my one last hard-tack and then left town by the railway ties.

Having spoken of boarding houses a number of times, I ought to explain that they were somewhat different from the usual place bearing that name in the United States. They took transients as well as weekly patrons, with a uniform charge of a shilling for a bed and a shilling for each meal. They were, in fact, workingmen's hotels, unpretentious but usually clean and decent.

All day I continued to walk the railway ties. Nowhere were there any houses at which I could ask for food without going a long way off my track; rather than do this, I went hungry. Shortly before dusk I reached a small village, and spying a boarding house made a bee line for the door.

"Can I get something to eat here?"

"You're right in time; we're just this minute sitting down to tea."

Most of the others had had a hearty Sunday dinner only a few hours earlier, and barely touched their food. I had had just two ship biscuit since breakfast the day before. I ate fast and furiously, clearing up all the bread plates in reach and dismantling the table generally, to the astonishment of the boarders and I dare say to the alarm of the good lady who kept the house.

"Could you eat another biscuit?" she asked, noticing that the delicious hot bread with which she had loaded the table had disappeared as completely as the enemies of the Children of Israel in the Red Sea.

"Could I? Just try me and see. In fact, keep on trying and you'll keep on seeing."

If I had eaten just a little less, it might have annoyed the good woman. In the circumstances it was like watching a championship contest; she was fascinated by the performance. I must have set a record for Sunday night tea at that house which stands to this day.

When at last I could eat no more I took the road again, for I wanted to get far enough to make my railway connection early the next morning. I tramped on through the night until I reached an out-of-the-way station, with a small open shed obviously designed for the accommodation of travelers. There I lay down to sleep.

The next morning I caught a train to Paeroa, the nearest point on the railway to the gold fields, and from there set out again on foot to cover the twelve miles up the mountain to Waihi, the principal gold-mining center of New Zealand. It was a stiff climb under a wilting sun, and my feet were beginning to weigh me down like the seven deadly sins when I fell in with a teamster who invited me to climb up on the seat beside him.

"It's no easy graft in the mines," the teamster observed, as we rode along, "especially for a new chum [a newcomer or greenhorn] without experience."

"I'm not looking for graft," I explained. "All I want is an ordinary sort of job, most any kind of chance to work."

He looked puzzled. "You can't hold a job if you don't graft. To be any use in the mines a man's got to be a good grafter; he's got to work."

It was my turn to be puzzled. "Work is my middle name," I said decisively, although not altogether accurately. For certainly work was not my first name and I hoped it wouldn't be my last. "That's what I want to do, work."

"And that's what I say you'll have to do. It's a hard graft in the mines, and you've got to be a good worker to get along."

It was my introduction to the word "graft" as used in New Zealand and Australia — meaning just the opposite of what it does in the United States. Graft in the antipodes signifies work, not dishonest plunder, and to call a man a good grafter is to compliment him as an able and willing worker.

All afternoon our wagon creaked up the winding mountain road. For the first time I was seeing some of the scenic beauty of New Zealand, the variety and extent of which I was to know much better later. Our road wound back and forth and about, and ever up, through a gorge. A river rushed and spattered and foamed below us. Beetling crags rose on either side, their precipitous flanks rocky and barren, their valleys and level spaces covered with a tangle of verdure.

Late in the afternoon we reached the top of the ridge, and Waihi. I put up at a boarding house overlooking a distant valley to the west, and after supper sat on the veranda to watch the glories of a midsummer sunset, reflecting that I had been banging about the road for five days and had spent three times the money it would have cost to come by railway from the Highs' farm. On this journey, with money in my pockets, I had been less fortunate than in tramping out of Auckland, with nothing.

An illustration of the disadvantages of wealth.

XVII

IN THE GOLD FIELDS

And it's blow, boys, blow!
For Califor-ni-o!
There's plenty of gold,
So I've been told,
On the banks of the Sa-cra-men-to.
— SAILORS' CHANTY

IT was not to the banks of the Sacramento but to those of the Ohinamuri that I came in search of fortune. In all fairness to the reader in search of thrills, it ought to be set down at the outset, too, that I found no princely nuggets nor made the lucky strike that surely would have been mine were this a concocted romance instead of a record of actual events. The gold of New Zealand is in scattering particles embedded in quartz rock. It can be extracted only with big plants and expensive machinery — then not always at much profit. The nearest I came to fortune was a job weeding an onion bed at $1.80 a day.

Gold mining in a quartz region is a skilled trade, and having had no experience I did not expect to get employment as a miner. But I wanted to see something of the work and breathe for a time a mining atmosphere. There would be chances of employment, I argued, in construction work, in trucking in the shafts, or as a laborer in the roaring batteries which ground the quartz in ponderous crushing machines, dissolved it in cyanide of potassium, and precipitated the particles of gold from the solution.

But "You won't find much work going on here", I was told at the boarding house. "They've just laid off two hundred men and everything is pretty dead. Why don't you try Karangahake, halfway down the mountain? It's the next most important mining town, and things are a bit brisker there."

So, after a few futile inquiries for work early the next morning, I retraced my steps as far as Karangahake, arriving in the afternoon. My first visit was to an unostentatious eating place which I learned later was known locally as the Dead Finish. It was across the way from the Dust Pan, a shop which sold ironware and general merchandise, while a few doors away was an eatery called the Dead Beat.

After a number of tries for work I made a favorable impression on the secretary of one of the mining companies.

"I don't know of any opening in the mines or the battery," he mused, "but I've a bit of work at my home down the road. If you care for it, you can be there in the morning."

"Right you are," I answered, and after he had pointed out his home from the office window, I withdrew to Old Tom's, a boarding house hanging to the mountainside, where I engaged food, lodging, and a superb view of tumbling river, twisting valley, and towering heights for eighteen shillings, or about $4.32 a week.

"Will you take your crib with you?" the housekeeper asked as I was about to start for work the next morning.

"My w-w-what?"

"Your crib."

The question was embarrassing. So far as I knew, I was not setting out to care for any one's baby, and if I had been I should have expected them to furnish both crib and infant. For my part, I had neither one nor the other and no ambitions that way. But I didn't propose to give myself away by asking what she meant. So I said yes at random and waited to see what would happen. Luckily. For presently the housekeeper appeared with two large sandwiches wrapped for the pocket.

"I thought you wouldn't be coming back at noon," she said. "I hope you'll find these enough."

My devotion to children and their cribs had saved me from going hungry at midday.

I put in a week weeding gardens, fixing walks, and doing other jobs about the home of the secretary.

"There doesn't seem to be much more to do around here," he said, surveying my work at the week's end. "The company is going to put up a small building near the office as an addition. We've got to get somebody to dig the hillside down before putting the carpenter to work. How are you with the pick and shovel?"

"You ought to see me," I returned with zest, hoping fervently that he wouldn't before giving me the job.

"It might as well be you as anybody," he concluded.

"Right ho," said I.

Thus sterling merit won me promotion to a job as navvy.

In the meanwhile I was seeing something of gold miners, if not of gold mines. The boarders at Old Tom's were far from the pistol-toting, hard-drinking, hard-gambling men with which tradition has peopled the gold-mining towns of our West in the pioneer days. (Probably our miners were far from such men too, but that is beside the present story.) My roommate at Old Tom's came in drunk every night, but he sprawled down on his cot in a quiet, genteel way, without cutting my throat or otherwise disturbing my slumber. Aside from the fact that he was out of a job, I never knew much about him, for he came in at night after

I had gone to bed and I went out in the morning before he was awake. It was an ideal arrangement, giving us both the maximum of privacy. From my point of view my roommate's habits were perfect, while I felt that the economic status of a man who managed so continuously to be in liquor and out of work must be beyond criticism.

The miners at Old Tom's seemed to me to be a responsible and unspectacular group of men, almost wholly British in origin. (So was ninety-seven per cent. of the population of New Zealand, I learned from the census.) They were inclined to run a little wild on Saturday nights, but spent most of the other evenings at a not too noisy game of cards for unimportant stakes.

"Don't forget to take your smoke ho while you're shovelling away that mountain," one of them warned me.

Seeing from my face that I didn't understand, he went on to explain. "No matter what we're doing, we take a smoke ho here in the Colonies. We stop work for ten or fifteen minutes in the middle of the morning and again in the afternoon for a smoke. Every boss expects it and every man does it. It's an old custom."

"Yes," I said, "but I'm in a hurry to get through with this job now. My boss must be thinking I've taken too much time on it already."

"Never mind the hurry," was the comfortable response. "There'll be plenty of work left when you and I are dead and gone."

Old Tom himself was an ex-miner and a man unusually well versed in regard to labor in New Zealand.

"This is a nation of workingmen," he told me one evening. "It hasn't a single millionaire, but the average income is the highest in the world."

New Zealand, he went on, was the first country to realize the eight-hour day, or more exactly the forty-eight-hour week, for its workers. That may sound like historical backwash at this time, when American labor leaders have begun to agitate for a working day of seven hours. But however fine this gesture looks, the forty-eight-hour week has not yet been won in the United States for large groups and numbers of workers, while it has been the rule in New Zealand for the last quarter of a century for both skilled and unskilled day laborers, for factory employees, for clerks in shops or stores — for everybody, indeed, except those on farms or in domestic service.

"The eight-hour day," continued Old Tom, "was an idea of the early settlers. There's a rhyme I've heard ever since I was a young fellow:

Eight hours work,
Eight hours play,
Eight hours sleep,
An' eight bob a day.

Samuel Parnell, who came out from England fifty years ago, is called the father of the eight-hour day. You'll find a tablet to him in Wellington, if you go there."

New Zealand has been called the "workingman's paradise." This, of course, is an exaggeration. Paradise is, and would best remain, a country of the imagination, but my own experience as a casual worker in New Zealand led me to regard it as peculiarly the Elysium of the unskilled laborer. I found no hard and fast lines between skilled and unskilled work, New Zealanders realizing that, justly viewed, there is no such thing as unskilled labor, although it is one of the world's misfortunes that there are unskilled laborers. The practical consequence, as it seemed to me, was that what we class as unskilled labor was relatively better paid than in the United States, and that there was not so much difference as with us between the return for such work and that of the trained mechanic.

After I had finished the pick-and-shovel job for the mining company I was kept for a while longer at odds and ends of work, but finally I had so little to do, and found it so hard an occupation to follow without getting caught, that I told the secretary I'd better be paid off and turned loose. My pay was at the rate of seven shillings, sixpence a day (about $1.80) for eight hours' work. That was a little under the standard wage of eight shillings a day for casual labor, but I had no complaint, for while my labor had been casual enough, there was a good deal of the time when it could not be called standard. In any event, my earnings had been more than twice the cost of my food and lodging, I had had Saturday afternoons and Sundays free, and I had lived in a pleasant place among agreeable companions.

My only misgiving was that I was leaving the gold fields without having been in the mines or even adequately seeing the inside of a battery. Still I had heard much talk of "sinking" and "rising", of putting in a "stope" or a "winze", and perhaps in later years I should be able to relate my experiences as eloquently as if I had spent a year underground.

XVIII

THE HOME OF THE NATIVES

For to-day I take or give;
For to-day I drink and live;
For to-day I beg or borrow: —
Who knows about the silent morrow?
— ANACREON

FROM the gold fields I headed south toward Wellington, going by train as far as I could — to Rotorua. Traveling by train gives one a different impression of a country from that gained by tramping — less intimate and friendly, more panoramic and sometimes more galvanic because of the succession of scenes piled one upon another. Farming communities, with the inevitable herds of dairy cattle, flitted past the windows, interspaced with scraps of untamed woodland or stretches covered only with a dense tangle of low-growing bushes. As we sped by such a waste, I turned to the man beside me.

"That's a desolate piece of bush," I remarked.

"It's desolate, but I don't see the bush."

"Why I see hundreds of them," I answered in surprise. "Weeds, vines, bushes all in a maze."

"That's not what we call bush in this country. It's what we call scrub."

He knew what he was talking about and I didn't. But I knew the next time.

Practically all of northern New Zealand which is not covered with forests, or has not been seeded with European grass or put into cultivation, is covered with a shaggy wool of weeds and brush. Brake ferns, growing tall and rank, sprawl over acres of ground, while wild flax and pampas grass also cover considerable areas. The most common and beautiful growth (if I may be pardoned the heresy that something which is common, even pestiferous, may be beautiful also) is the feathery-leaved, olive-green tea tree, or manuca, in some places a stunted bush but elsewhere lifting its sprangly, wavy top ten to fifteen feet in the air.

This shaggy wool, covering acre upon acre of land, would seem to be exactly described by the word bush, but it is not so known in the Colonies. As the man beside me in the train explained, it is called scrub.

"Bush means the native forests," he said. "In a more general way it is used to describe any wild region, or the country in distinction from the towns."

The New Zealand bush is beautiful, but owing to the predominance of evergreens, with their brooding masses of blue-green foliage, it is a little somber and monotonous. New Zealand is a land of evergreens. It is also a nursery of ferns. There are some one hundred and fifty varieties, the largest of which is the beautiful tree fern, reaching twenty-five feet or more in height. This and the cabbage tree, similar in appearance to our palmetto, give a tropical character to the landscape wherever they are plentiful.

Rotorua is in the hot springs and geyser region of New Zealand, modestly referred to in the Government advertising as the "Wonderland of the World" and the "Sanitarium of the Earth." It is also the old tribal seat, and was, at the time of my visit, at least, the principal settlement of the native race. In the undeveloped and sparsely settled country thereabout the Maori was to be found living much in the manner of more primitive days.

There seemed to be little racial antagonism between whites and Maoris, although intermarriage was rare and was discouraged by both sides. In the band which I heard on the grounds of the Government sanitarium on the night of my arrival in Rotorua, Maoris and whites played side by side, with a Maori as leader.

"We call Rotorua the Housewife's Heaven — at least for the Maoris," said the keeper of the inn where I put up. "When you go out for a look to-morrow you'll find pools everywhere, running from lukewarm to boiling in temperature. In other places you'll find jets of steam hissing up from holes in the ground. At meal times all the Maori women have to do is to bring out their cooking dishes and set them into the bubbling pools or over the spouts of steam."

"There seems to be nothing lacking for a good meal except food," I commented.

"Oh, they're not badly off for food either. The rents from their lands are enough so that the Maoris can live without much regular work. They raise a little in the way of grain and vegetables, and if anybody has a larger crop than he needs for himself he is not supposed to sell it outside but to give it away among his neighbors. The Maoris have enough to eat and no trouble at all to cook it. There's a boiling puddle or a jet of steam for everybody. And besides these smaller places there are large pools, hot and cold, for washing clothes or bathing."

"It sounds well and I'd go out for a bath to-night but for fear I might jump into a boiling lake in mistake for a cold plunge."

Rotorua was the end of the railway line from the north. To the south was one hundred and fifty miles of wild and almost unsettled country to Napier, where another railway would carry me on to Wellington. A stage coach ran twice a week from Rotorua to Napier, which I had been counting on taking.

"The stage goes through in three days — fifty miles a day," I was told by my host at the inn. "You spend two nights at inns and stop at noon for dinner at other places which the stage company keeps up along the route. The fare is three pounds, fifteen shillings."

I gasped. In addition there would be the expense of food and lodging. The charges would more than swallow my small savings; the stage company evidently had an eye on English tourists' pocketbooks rather than on mine.

"I had thought of walking," I said, with what was intended to be dignity but doubtless appeared to my host only too plainly in its true character — surprised alarm.

"Hm-m-m," he grunted. "It's a hard walk. There's no place to stop or get anything to eat except at the stage company's inns, twenty-five miles apart. You'd have to walk twenty-five miles a day for a week."

"How is the going — hard or easy?"

"The first half is through a volcanic country where nothing much grows and nobody lives. It's pretty level, but dusty and tiresome. And there's no water," he added thoughtfully. "After that you get into the mountains and the sheep country. The road is uphill and down all day, past big sheep runs. Nobody lives there either, except a few men to take care of the sheep, and they are at the stations way back from the road."

The prospect was a little bleak in one way, but in another it strongly appealed to me. A mental calculation told me that the stagecoach fare was at the rate of sixpence a mile. A walk of twenty-five miles a day was equivalent to three dollars in my pocket, better wages than had come my way thus far.

The next day I visited the hot-springs district in the neighborhood of Rotorua. The much-talked-of geysers I did not see in action. They are temperamental creatures which, like opera stars, perform only a few times a week, or a month — I've forgotten which. To me it scarcely mattered. I've never had a consuming passion for the "natural wonders" of the world, or for its historic spots. (I lived eight years in Washington without ever visiting Mount Vernon, and I do not add, "I shame to confess." On the contrary, it is the only achievement of my Washington residence that I recall with pride or gusto.) To me, as I have knocked about the world, people have been the most wonderful creation in it. Nothing else begins to be as odd, as intriguing, as susceptible of indefinite exploration.

Having seen the hot springs, I returned to my hotel and reduced my swag to even less than I had been carrying, sending to Napier by express everything of any weight except one blanket, my camera, and a pair of dungaree trousers from my sea days, the latter in case I should stop for a few days' work along the road. I kept by me also two small paper-bound volumes — "Paradise Lost" and "Paradise Regained" — to read when I stopped to rest on my tramp through New Zealand's waste lands. I have had a kindly sentiment for dour old John Milton ever since. I confess I've never reread either poem. (I was about to write "I shame to confess", but I suppose there are few who have read these books more than once — then usually as required reading in school or college — and besides, if I were ashamed to confess the fact, I shouldn't do so.) Anyhow I found something in the sonorous dignity of

Milton's verse that seemed admirably in keeping with the lonely and austere country through which I tramped the following week.

"I'm leaving in the morning," I told my hotel keeper. "I'm going to walk to Napier. I can't afford to pay the fancy rates the inns along the road charge, so they'll have to look out for me for nothing."

The speech didn't shock my host as much as I expected it would.

"Hm-m-m," he mumbled. "So you're taking the road as a sundowner." He meditated a moment and then lowered his voice. "I wouldn't say that there was any need of walking all the way. There's a stage going from here to-morrow as far as Lake Taupo, the first fifty miles of your way. It's run for the tourists; they can afford to pay for it, but the driver is a good fellow, and whenever anybody living in the neighborhood wants a lift he usually gets it, if there's room." The hotel keeper came closer to me and added confidentially, "For nothing."

"Of course, you can't get on here, where everybody would see you. Get an early start, go down the road a mile or so, and be on the lookout when the stage comes along."

XIX

"SUNDOWNING" THROUGH MAORI LAND

Bed in the bush with stars to see,
Bread I dip in the river —
There's the life for a man like me,
There's the life forever.

. . . . . .

Wealth I seek not, hope nor love,
Nor a friend to know me;
All I seek the heaven above
And the road below me.

— ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

THE stage swirled down on me in a billow of dust, two pairs of horses hitched tandem and a fifth in front. I kept the center of the road, my eyes straight ahead, until the coach was almost upon me, so that it would have to slow up. Then I stepped aside. I had never held up a stagecoach before. The proceeding, which had presented itself as simple the night before, now appeared more formidable. The equipage, with its five steaming horses, was impressive, while the driver, seated halfway up Mount Olympus, as it looked to me from the roadside, seemed above the reach of mortals. An imposing chariot and a charioteer not to be imposed upon, I reflected. Who was I to stop such a procession? The hail that I was about to utter stuck between my lips. I strangled it, and the stage would have rumbled on for all of me. But the driver was not adamant, after all. He shoved hard on the brakes and pulled his horses back on their haunches with a "Whoa, there—whoa!"

"Want a lift, Mate?" he shouted through the fog of dust.

Did I?

"Jump up here beside me."

A crack of a whip. A flourish of intricate reins over the horses' backs. A jerk, a rattle of harness, a clatter of wheels. I was rolling away behind five tugging horses toward Lake Taupo, a six-dollar ride at an expense of — considerably less.

At first I felt under some constraint, thinking it was due from me to squeeze into a small space and maintain a thankful silence. (Possibly I was suffering from stage fright!) Gradually it oozed upon my consciousness that the driver looked upon me as his star passenger, far above the mere tourists whose only function was to pay the bills.

At noon we stopped for dinner at one of the company's inns. I wasn't sure that it was orthodox for me to drive up in a coach and five and then panhandle the landlord for a free hand-out, but my friend the driver pooh-poohed my hesitations.

"Oh, he'll understand all right. You come along."

We met mine host at the back of the hotel, and the driver made the only speech that was delivered.

"He's with me," he said to the landlord, nodding in my direction. Upon which the driver and I stalked into the kitchen and sat down, while two persons, the cook and one of the girls, devoted themselves almost exclusively to looking after our wants. I hate to think how little attention the mere tourists in the dining room must have received by comparison, although I imagine there was somebody standing by at least to take their money. When the cook asked me if I would have roast beef or mutton potpie I was still suffering from the blight of modesty that the surprises of the morning had put upon me and thought it becoming of one in my position not to have a preference.

"It doesn't matter," I murmured.

The driver, the cook, and the girl all gave me a look of wonder as if to say, "How extraordinary!" So when we were asked to choose between sago pudding and strawberry blancmange for dessert, I knew my mind.

"Blancmange," said my bold hero decisively, and was rewarded by an extra large portion.

The driver looked his approval, and as we were polishing our dishes undertook to assist my education as a sundowner with some personal reminiscences.

"When I was a young cock in Australia I sundowned all over the sheep country o' Victoria and New South Wales. Me and a couple o' mates used to stop a month or so at some station until we was fed up with work and then hump bluey fer a while. Whenever we come to a station we'd go to the house and ask fer our rations."

"Your what?"

"Our rations. Some fresh meat, flour, and salt. That was the regular rule in those days. We got our rations and then cooked them on the road or in one o' the buildings at the station, where they bunked the extra men at shearing time. Mostly we cooked on the road — roasted the meat and made damper in an open fire. Ever eat damper?"

"Not yet."

"You've missed something, Mate. Wish I had some now. Nothing but flour and water and salt — baked in the ashes and eaten hot. It's good tucker — least it seemed so to me then."

"Did they ever refuse you — your rations?"

"Sometimes they did at first, but we usually converted them to a better way of thinking."

"When a man is hungry he can be pretty persuasive, I suppose."

"You might call it that. Whenever any old ram was nasty about our rations, one o' us 'd say as sweet as a girl at her first communion, 'Would you mind giving us a pound o' salt?' "

"That meant — "

"They knew what it meant, all right. They knew if we didn't get our meat from them, we'd get it fer ourselves by going out and killing a sheep. After that we didn't have to be what you might call any too all-fired persuasive."

During the morning I had ridden on the huge seat in front with the driver and three others, while five persons sat inside the coach. Before we resumed our places after dinner the driver touched me on the shoulder and, as if he were asking a great favor, whispered in my ear, "Would you mind riding inside the rest o' the way? One o' the other passengers [yes, he said "other passengers"] wants to sit outside with me, where he can see better. You don't mind, do you?"

So when we started I piled inside, stepping on the toes of the "other passengers" as freely and crowding them as unhesitatingly as if I had been paying my way. Thanks to the driver's efforts, I was recovering from the attack of excessive modesty that had beset me earlier in the day.

There were five of us inside: a stout Englishman with a stout wife, a lean Englishman without one, a New Zealander, and myself. The conversation started inauspiciously when the Colonial asked the stout Englishman if he had been in the country before.

"No, sir, I'm happy to say this is my first visit and it'll be my last."

The New Zealander took the answer in good part, and tried again, finally getting the talk going on the Maoris. He thought it unfortunate that their land had been taken from them, even if they were paid for it.

"We've taken other people's land before theirs," said the stout Englishman decisively, "so they oughtn't to grumble," thus expressing, as it seemed to me, a naïve but eminently British philosophy.

Finally, other topics having languished, we fell back on the weather, the lean Englishman remarking that he was homesick most of all for an English fog.

"Yes," said his stout countryman with his first touch of enthusiasm, "there's nothing I'd like better myself right now than a good old London particular." Then he laughed at the whim and added, "After all our insular prejudices do make us ridiculous."

Which was good of the Englishman.

"It's his insular prejudices," the New Zealander cut in quickly, "that have made John Bull what he is."

Which was better of the Colonial.

It was when the conversation turned to England, America, and the Colonies that it most interested me.

"I believe," observed the lean Englishman, "that this country is more American than English. This coach we're riding in is on American springs and we're traveling behind horses in American harness."

In the discussion which followed the New Zealander hazarded the opinion that it didn't matter much, because some day the Stars and Stripes and the Union Jack would be one.

The Englishmen opened their mouths together.

"Never!" they exploded in a breath.

"Never" is a long word. It is like the word "impossible''. Neither is to be spoken lightly, especially by an American, and so I held my peace. But in my heart I felt the Englishmen were right.

When we descended from the coach at Lake Taupo that night the stout Englishman's stout wife handed me a lunch which she had had put up in the morning but had not touched. Put up, as it had been, for a stout lady, it served nicely my far from lean appetite, and after a stroll beside the lake, I enjoyed the luxury of sleeping on springs. True there was a layer of boards between me and them, for I stretched myself in the bottom of a buggy in the hotel stable.

I rose the next morning, Sunday, keen for the hundred-mile walk to Napier. But first I wanted breakfast. The hotel at Lake Taupo was not what one would call hospitable. At least, not if one were accurate in the use of language. I had gathered as much the night before from the driver who, when he found me preparing a bed for myself in the wilderness of the buggy, had said apologetically, ''I'd see that you were looked after right, but this rooster here is a queer sort of cuss. I don't have much to do with him.''

I met the rooster as I went toward the hotel in the morning. We spoke to each other and he said amiably, ''You'll find a patch of gooseberries in the garden the other side of the hotel. Help yourself to as many as you like.''

If it was his idea that I should begin a twenty-five mile tramp on green fruit without any succeeding courses, there was an irreconcilable difference of opinion between us. I realized now that I had committed an error of strategy the night before in contenting myself with the lunch (satisfying as it was) given me by the stout Englishman's stout wife, instead of walking assuredly into the kitchen for supper. When traveling as a tramp, as I have hinted before, one must be bold, insistent, and immediate. One cannot trifle or dally with people's generosity; it's an unstable quality that may ooze away or grow cool. Give people an inch and they'll take an ell. Let them off from giving you supper and they'll want to deny you breakfast too. You mustn't give them a chance to be ungenerous; if necessary, be generous for them. Keep their hearts bleeding; the flow clots all too readily.

After waiting quite long enough to be asked to have breakfast, I walked into the kitchen and initiated aggressive tactics.

"I wonder if I could have a cup of tea?" I asked, as a preparatory salvo.

The girl whom I addressed said nothing as ungraciously as possible and after a few minutes' delay handed me a cup of tea — and nothing else. Then she turned her back. Niggardliness is as infectious as hospitality. The kitchen girl had caught the germ from the rooster who commended to me a diet of gooseberries. But I recalled the notices that guests were not to put up with negligence or discourtesy on the part of hotel employes.

"Have you a little bread to go with the tea?" I inquired kindly but firmly, as if it hurt me more than it did her — and perhaps it did.

At that she shrugged her shoulders and capitulated.

"You may as well set down here," and clearing a place at the table, she put beside the tea a bountiful plate of buttered toast — for which, no doubt, one of my fellow passengers of the day before was waiting impatiently in the dining room.

The day promised to be hot, and advised that there was no water on the road, I filled an empty bottle and put it into a side pocket of my coat. For a mile or so I passed along the beautiful shores of Lake Taupo, grassy and wooded. On the far side of the clear blue-green water rose through a trembling haze the snow-tipped peak of Ruapehu and the outline of Ngauruhoe, the latter the only active volcano in New Zealand. I stopped on my way to take some photographs of a Maori mother and her children and of their *whare* beside the lake. I should have liked to stay to chat a while, the children were so lovely and the mother so friendly, although a pitiably wrinkled, bent, and disheveled old hag to look upon. But their English was as scant as my Maori, so we grinned all around, waved hands, and parted.

Lake Taupo was soon left behind for a desolate, treeless country too dry and unfertile to nourish even scrub except of an extremely sparse and stunted sort. The sun glared hot and unremittingly overhead, while the dust rose under my feet. The water bottle, bumping annoyingly against one arm, impeded its free swing, and I was not wholly sorry when, having worn a hole in the pocket, the bottle slid to the ground. I drank the contents and threw the bottle aside. The walking was heavy in places on account of sand, but I went on briskly as the morning was already well along and I still had the most of twenty-five miles to cover before I could hope for water, food, or shelter.

About midday I was surprised to find a solitary swag man resting under the shade of a clump of friendly tea trees that had found a little strip of soil deep and tolerant enough to permit them to stretch up six or eight feet on the way to heaven, although lack of faith would probably have kept them from getting nearer even with the aid of the most kindly and helpful earth. The tea tree is not of the true believers.

"I've been walking from Napier," said my fellow traveler. "I'm going in the direction you've been coming from. I had good work where I was, but I got into debt so deep I had to skip out. I never thought I'd come to it, but I've been going lower every year until finally I've reached the swag."

He gave me some information about the route and the hospitality to be expected at different points. I did the same for him.

"I want to get to Yankee Land some day," he remarked, using a term by which the United States is often known in New Zealand. "But I don't suppose I ever shall," he added wistfully.

Like the tea tree, I reflected, he was kept down by lack of faith — or was it only a sane acceptance of imponderable fact?

I noticed that my fellow swagger had a watch lying on the ground beside him, at which he occasionally glanced.

"Are you walking on a schedule?" I asked.

"I'm keeping the eight hours. I walk four hours in the morning, rest an hour at noon, then go on for another four hours."

I smiled my admiration and surprise. Earnest believer in the eight-hour principle as I was, I had never thought of applying it that far. I marvelled to find, even in New Zealand, a devotion to the tenets of labor which extended to the lonely swagger tramping through the wastes of Maori Land, and it came to me that one of the secrets why workingmen there had accomplished more for themselves than had been obtained elsewhere was that other men *said* they believed while in New Zealand they *did* believe.

I had wronged this wayfarer by imputing to him the tea tree's lack of faith. Or had I wronged the tea tree also?

I should not want to tire any one with an account of that day's walk as much as it tired me. My mouth and throat were taut and parched with thirst. My teeth were gritty with the dust I had scuffed up in the heavy going; my eyes and nostrils were filled. The sand had worked into my shoes; my feet were sore and smarting. My legs no longer seemed to propel my body or to reach ahead of it; they trailed behind and had to be dragged up laboriously, stride by stride, to prevent their dropping out from under me.

The sun, now an insolent red disk, was within a few minutes of disappearing below the tired, barren country upon which all day it had been grinning malignantly. I scanned the road ahead. Still nothing but an undulating, sandy desert, with purple shadows now mercifully stretching out here and there to robe its ugly nakedness. I was reluctantly making up my mind to forget that I was thirsty, hungry, grimy, footsore, and to camp out along the roadside for the night when —

Presto! A valley, invisible until you were right upon it, dropped out of the plain. . . . Or did it? . . . Was it perhaps a mirage or a hallucination? . . . My vision seemed to be unsteady; my head light and strangely disconnected from my all too heavy legs.

But yes. The valley was surely there. It sparkled fresh and inviting, calming and peaceful in the last yellow rays of the sinking sun. In the middle of the valley a stream of water. Along the river's banks an oasis of green grass. Near the road a clump of shade trees, a red house, an un-painted barn. Nothing at all remarkable, but I have never seen a wetter river, greener grass, cooler trees, or a more satisfying house and barn.

I sat down and rested myself for a while just in looking at them.

"Can I get a drink of water here?"

It was my first word at the red house. The landlord — for it was the inn of the stage company for which I had set out — had anticipated it, coming to the door with a pitcher in his hand. I rinsed the dirt out of my mouth and then, scorning the proffered glass, raised the pitcher to my lips and tipped back my head. Presently I returned the pitcher.

"Might I have another?"

My host watched, astonished, as the contents of the second pitcher evaporated like that of the first and, having assured himself that I didn't want a third, he put his first question.

"Want a shakedown?" Without waiting for a reply he hazarded another inquiry, "What ship did you run away from?"

What ship did I run away from? I could have flung my arms about this man and kissed him. In an early chapter I told of my humiliation when upon going aboard the *Lethington* in New York I was not recognized as one of the crew — how the watchman had stopped me at the entrance to the dock and asked sarcastically, "Are you a sailor? . . . Well, you don't look like one."

I don't, eh? Where is that thinks-he's-so-funny watchman now? Vindicated at last! Picked out as belonging to the sea by the landlord of a country hotel in the wilderness of New Zealand!

"You'll find a cool bath in the river, if you want it," continued my host. He could see better than I could, no doubt, the grime with which I was covered. But he couldn't feel it so acutely.

"There's nothing I want more at the moment," I answered, and headed for the stream. My bath was more than cool. The water seemed almost ice-cold, issuing from deep-down springs in the near-by mountains. I had a hasty plunge and then dangled my feet in the foaming, tumbling current until the soreness was gone. While doing so, I discovered that the stream was alive with trout. I learned later that the Rangitaiki River in these upper reaches was considered one of the finest trout streams in New Zealand, though seldom visited because of its remoteness. Unfortunately, I had neither the means nor the desire for fishing at the moment.

Upon returning to the house after my dip, I found waiting for me a jug of tea, the end of a leg of cold roast mutton, some soda biscuit, and a quantity of hard-tack.

"You'll find some sheepskins in the barn," said the hotel keeper, "when you want to turn in."

I thanked him and remarked, "There's food enough here for two men."

"Well," he chuckled, "after seeing you drink, I didn't know how long you might want to eat. Besides, I thought I'd set out enough tucker so you'd have some left for breakfast in case you should want to make a start before the rest of us are up. And in case, of course," he finished with another chuckle, "you get through supper before breakfast time."

So abundantly was I supplied with food that even after an early breakfast the next day there was enough left to have enabled me to carry a lunch. I did not, because experience thus far had convinced me that while on the road breakfast and supper were sufficient and a noonday bite not worth the bother of carrying. Walking is supposed to produce an appetite. As an occasional exercise, perhaps it does, but as a daily occupation I had not found it did, and in my tramp through to Napier I got along on two meals a day without even a hankering for another.

Monday's walk took me out of the sandy plain I had traveled the day before and into the mountains. It brought me at night to the village of Tarawera where, as usual, I went to the inn, with the intention of putting up at its expense.

"I suppose you are a good hand with the saw," remarked the boss, in response to my representations.

"I'm not too bad at it," said I, and although it was a breach of professional ethics which, had it leaked out, might have got me into trouble with the International Union of Sundowners, Swag Men, and Tramps, Local Number 999, I took off my coat and did as much as I could to the woodpile before dark.

I note this incident because it was the only instance in all my trampings in New Zealand when I was asked to do anything in return for my accommodation, but as I had an excellent hot supper, a good bunk in the storehouse, and a warm meal again in the morning, I was well satisfied with the program.

XX

THE SHEEP COUNTRY

No man will ever unfold the capacities of his own intellect, who does not at least chequer his life with solitude.

— THOMAS DE QUINCEY

THE next day's walk, the third from Lake Taupo, was the hardest I had. It was a stretch of thirty miles through the mountains. I climbed one ridge after another, up, up, up over the twisting, stony road, down and down until I lost everything gained; then winding around and mounting until I reached another height, only to go jolting down to begin it all over.

I was coming into a country of great sheep runs, lonely mountain acres where vast flocks gleaned their rough provender amidst the dense mat of scrub and occasional stretch of untamed forest that unrolled before me, miles and miles of it without a sign of human habitation. Even of the sheep I saw only a few — here and there some blotches of dirty wool clinging to an open mountainside, or a bunch of animals near the road, nibbling at the green tops of low-growing scrub. Mostly they were lost in the thickets of bracken, brambles, and bushes that gave them food and shelter.

It was not so hot or dusty or heavy walking as on my first day out from Lake Taupo. But the road was up and down, hard and stony. And long. How it was long! I started earlier, took fewer rests, and yet plodded on later than on the two previous days of my tramp. It was important to reach shelter, for this mountain region would have made a cold bed after nightfall with my one not-too-thick blanket.

And lonely. How it was lonely! Not a house in sight. Not a single fellow wayfarer on foot. Not a human creature of any sort, as I recall it, except two unkempt men on horseback who looked curiously at a foot traveler in that lonely wilderness, nodded silently as they passed, and then rode on out of sight. Not even a domestic animal, except an occasional bunch of sheep, scattering at the odd sight of a man on foot, or raising their heads to gaze at me, dumb and impassive, then returning indifferently to their browsing. Nothing about me but deep, dark forest or far-flung acres of tangled, low-growing scrub; a sullen, gray sky above; a rough, winding road ahead, on and on, on and on. . . .

The question may arise why I did not seek to travel with some one. I never did, on this tramp or any other in New Zealand. It was not so much that

> Down to Gehenna or up the throne,
> He travels the fastest who travels alone.

I was not pressed for time. But I usually had a destination, and when two or more travel together, it is not always possible to agree on this. Besides, one man "humping bluey" by himself can find numerous opportunities for work where there are none for more persons.

But chiefly, I traveled alone because I preferred it so. A good tramping companion is one of the rarities in a world rather too lavishly provided with people in general. There are plenty of men whom I would be willing to join in a business partnership that I would not want as companions when roughing it on the road; there are many women whom I would rather marry for life than go camping with for a week. I am not one of the numerous tribe that would rather have any company than none. Indifferent as it may be, I can tolerate a great deal of my own society. Through considerable practice, I have come rather to like it. I find other people infinitely interesting as long as I can get away from them when I want to. There are times when I shun the society of even the best minds to be alone with my own somewhat inferior one. Were it otherwise I should never have run away from New York to roam about the antipodes.

Fortunately I was plentifully supplied with drinking water and not harried with thirst, as on my first day out from Lake Taupo. Mountain streams bubbled across the road every few miles, some of them so sizable that I took off my shoes and rolled up my trousers to ford them. They cooled and soothed my road-pounded feet, but as the afternoon waned into evening the wish to reach my destination outweighed any desire to avoid the discomfort of tramping in wet shoes, and I floundered through streams without pausing, bent only on pushing forward.

Long after dark I plodded on, until lights ahead brought the cheerful news that I was nearing the stage company's wayside inn. It was so late that I hesitated to ask for food, and I was too tired anyhow to want any.

"I've had supper," I said to the man who opened the door, "but I'd like a place to sleep."

He looked at me, as if wondering where I could have had supper, and what, on the route over which I had come, but he didn't press for details.

"You can sleep in the stable yonder," was all he said.

As I was about to enter I heard a whisking and rustling that made me cautious. Having no wish to blunder in among a lot of strange horses' heels in the middle of the night, I returned to the house for further data.

"Horses? Why there are no horses in there," I was assured. "But here's a candle to find your way about."

The candle showed that he was right. There were no horses in the stable. But six bushy sheep dogs, spread out on a layer of hay over all the available floor space, raised their noses to the light, blinking and yawning prodigiously. They offered no hostilities and I didn't mind chumming with them, but I shunned closer acquaintance with the redoubtable bodyguard of fleas with which I knew each one traveled. There was a loft filled with oat straw, and by squeezing along between it and the roof, at the imminent risk of setting the place ablaze with my candle, I finally burrowed a hole in which I enjoyed as warm and good a sleep as any one short of a sybarite could ask for.

After some breakfast the next morning I started on the home stretch. It was my fifth day from Rotorua, my fourth on foot from Lake Taupo. I expected to reach Napier that night. By afternoon I got out of the mountains and into the valley of the Esk, a fertile, well-settled agricultural country in contrast to the rugged wilderness through which I had just passed. Now I was among farmhouses, passing teams, gardens, pastures, and other signs of civilization and life. During the previous days of my tramp I had met only one traveler on foot, the man I had chatted with under the tea trees soon after leaving Lake Taupo, and two or three men ahorse from the sheep stations. For companions I had had only bleak, desolate mountain ranges, possibly magnificent but certainly far from sociable.

I have confessed to a liking for solitude, but it can be overdone. In tramping alone, one ought to choose a settled country, or at least one with scenery of a quiet, homelike sort. I dare say the mountains through which I passed possessed many beauties. In fact, I remember reading something to that effect in the guide-book. If I had been with friends, and traveling in a different way, I doubt not I should have enjoyed these beauties hugely. But alone and afoot, without any certainty of food or a place to crawl in out of the cold at the end of the day, with the chance at any time of an accident to lay me up on the road and reasonable opportunity for getting lost, I recall those mountains only as stern and forbidding barriers which I longed to leave behind me.

The sheep runs which I had passed earlier on the route had been vast tracts, the few guardians of which lived at stations out of sight and far back from the road. I now began to pass stations within my reach, and as I had it in mind that I should like to try sheep farming for a while, I inquired at several places for work. Late in the afternoon, I turned aside into Clark's.

"No," said the boss, "there's nothing here now. The only time we need extra men is in the shearing season. Just now there's hardly work enough for the men we have. Sorry."

I was turning away when he called me back.

"You'll want a ticket."

"A ticket?" I echoed in mystification. Did he consider me a likely victim to pester into buying half a dozen admissions to a church fair or charity bazaar?

"You'll want a ticket for your supper," he explained, seeing that I was puzzled. He handed me a slip of paper.

"Give that to the housekeeper."

I had been expecting to push on into Napier that night for supper and bed, but this was an opportunity not to be tossed aside. Supper was over and the dishes washed, I found, when I presented my ticket at the housekeeper's door. I was doubtful about my reception. I should get little in the way of food, I reflected, and plenty in the way of scolding.

"Wait a bit outside," the housekeeper remarked, looking me over noncommittally. I sat down and waited for what seemed to me the devil of a long time. I was thinking the housekeeper had gone off to bed, leaving me to wait outside until morning, when the door opened with a flood of cheerful lamplight behind it.

"Your supper's ready. Come in and sit down."

A moment later I was attacking a specially prepared meal. There was juicy steak with fried potatoes, so crisp that they crackled as I set my teeth into them. There were biscuits, flaky and hot, with an abundance of butter. There was freshly brewed tea with all the trimmings. And — blessed recollection — there was a heaping plate of apple pudding with *a large pitcher of thick cream!*

Jumping Jerusalem! Did I eat? I didn't do anything else for a full half hour. It was better than a meal of nectar and ambrosia on Mount Olympus. Though I live to be as old as Methuselah and as famished as Nebuchadnezzar when he got down on hands and knees and ate grass, I never expect to stow away a better supper.

I can taste that cream yet.

When I had finished and, somewhat bewildered, was thanking the housekeeper, she pointed across the way.

"You will sleep in that *whare* yonder," she said.

I did not dispute the point with her, for although it had been my intention to walk on into Napier that day, it was growing dark and the prospect of a good night's rest appealed to me. I put my blanket in one of the bunks of the *whare*, a rough shed fixed up to accommodate extra hands at sheep-shearing time, and then strolled out into the quiet summer twilight to talk with one of the men on the place and play with his little boy. Everything seemed restful and calm, after nearly a week of knocking about the road. Through the dusk I could see the surrounding hills, low and round, not steep and craggy like the mountains I had been through; the hillsides were not splotched with barren scars or matted with coarse scrub, but covered with short velvety grass. The valley was dotted with splendid trees; cattle browsed contentedly in the pastures; everywhere I scented an air of serenity and repose.

With Napier only a few miles away, I felt that my journey was done. Bidding my friend and his little son good night, I rolled into my bunk, to lie half-thinking, half-dreaming of the time when as a boy I too used to run barefoot in the long summer twilights about a farm somewhere on the other side of the world.

XXI

A SAWDUSTER IN THE TALL TIMBER

There in the stillness of the mountain road
We just could hear the valley river flow
With dreamy murmur through the slumbering day
Lulling the dark-browed woods now passed away.
— WILLIAM PEMBER REEVES

AWAKING early the next morning, I rolled up my blanket and was starting down the lane to take again the road toward Napier, when I was hailed by the man with whom I had been chatting the night before.

"Where are you going?" he called.

"I'm making an early start so as to get into Napier before the sun gets hot."

"Well, stay and have breakfast first," he said, in a voice whose authority I could no more oppose than the ultimatum of the housekeeper the night before in telling me where I was to sleep. Kindness is doubly kind when it is done with a casualness, even brusqueness, that relieves one of the feeling that he must fall on his knees to express proper appreciation of it.

A few hours later I was in Napier, one of New Zealand's oldest settlements, a seaport with considerable Colonial and over-the-ocean trade. Having come to the end of my tramp, I thought it was time to start paying my way for a change, and took a room at a hotel for the night.

When I left Rotorua I had a five-pound note and some pennies. The latter I gave to a group of Maori children en route; the five pounds was still intact. As I planned to spend several weeks in Wellington playing the gentleman, I wanted to have a little more money in pocket, and decided not to go straight through by train but to break my journey at Dannevirke, the center of an important lumbering region, where I had been told one could make at least nine shillings a day in the bush.

When I returned to the hotel that night the landlord greeted me sourly.

"I won't be able to let you have that room to-night," he announced.

"Why not?" I inquired brusquely, although I guessed at once that my somewhat seedy appearance after a succession of nights in stables and woodsheds, together with my failure to pass any money across the bar during the day, had made him distrustful of my financial integrity.

"I had forgotten when I said you could stay that I had already promised the place to another man."

"Sorry for the other man," I returned, "but that's your lookout — not mine. My things are in the room already, and I'll be there myself in a minute. What's more I'll stay there until morning. I'm not going to look for another place in the middle of the night."

That ended the courtesies.

His face red with excitement, the fat little mannikin roared so that he could be heard from cellar to roof, "*Then pay at once!*"

"I'll pay when I go, like anybody else."

"You'll pay *or* go," he corrected.

Running upstairs ahead of me he locked the door of my room and, bursting with perspiration from anger and the unusual exercise, shouted, "Now get out of here or I'll send for the police."

Nothing would have been more to my liking than to have knocked him on the broad of his back in his own hallway, but I reflected that he probably had the law on his side — landlords usually do — and it would mean a delay for me of a month or so in jail. As I was not studying the penal system of New Zealand, I thrust my hands into my pockets instead of against his nose.

"You've locked the door on *my* belongings as well as *your* room," I reminded him. "Get them out and I'll leave your house gladly, as I hope every one else will. May you never be bothered with another patron till the day after eternity!"

At the outside door I pulled out my pocketbook and jingled it in his face, to show him the mistake he had made.

"Coppers!" he sniffed derisively, but he added with chagrin, as I passed out, "Why didn't you pay me as I asked?"

I stopped for the night at another hotel, where I was *not asked to pay in advance*, and I had a good laugh before going to bed over the thought that after obtaining free food and lodging for a week without difficulty, my first attempt to pay for entertainment was balked by the refusal of the hotel owner to let me.

While I was standing on the railway platform the next morning waiting for my train, a man approached me and, judging by the swag at my side that I was looking for work, inquired without any preliminaries, "Want a job?"

"Doing what?"

"Cleaning railway carriages."

"How much?"

"Seven bob, eight hours a day. You go on at six in the morning and are off at three in the afternoon, with an hour at noon for dinner."

Cleaning railway cars would have been easy work, I should have lost no days on account of rain or other causes, the pay was fair, and the hours would give me a good deal of liberty which I could use in Napier to advantage.

Still I declined the offer. I had heard of the big wages to be made at lumbering, and I was eager for that kind of experience. Besides, I had learned that there was plenty of work in New Zealand, had refused a job on the way out of Rotorua, and was inclined to take a haughty attitude toward any employment. Later I had reason to regret my rashness.

At Dannevirke I left the train and walked for a couple of days from the headquarters of one timber company to another, only to have it dawn on me gradually that the one likely way to get work was to go off into the forests where the bush gangs were, tramping from camp to camp until I found something. I had about decided to do this when chance dropped in my lap exactly what I wanted.

"I'm getting ready to open a new sawmill on the coast," the head of a timber company told me. "I want a few sailors to help in rafting logs with a small launch. Would you care to try your hand at it?"

Would I? Nothing could suit me better, and forgetting to ask about wages or anything else, I told him I was his.

"We're not quite ready to begin yet," he continued, "but if you like, you can go out to a small mill of mine near here and work for a few days while we're getting ready to start the job on the coast."

It was Saturday afternoon and I walked out to the mill that evening, settling myself in a *whare* with another sailor who, like myself, had been engaged for rafting.

"How soon are they going to open that mill on the coast?" he asked with interest.

"Right away," I answered confidently. "The boss didn't mention an exact day, but he said in a few days."

"A few days, eh? A *fe-ew my-y eye-e!*" He dragged the words out sarcastically and spat with vicious emphasis. "That's what the old barnacle said when he sent me out here."

"When was that?" I asked with an oozing of confidence.

"I've been here a month already, and as nearly as I can learn, it'll be another before they want anybody at the mill on the coast."

When I went to work on Monday morning I had another surprise.

"What wages did the old man promise you?" the foreman asked.

"He — he said he was sending me out here for only a few days. We — we didn't talk about wages, but so long as nothing was said, I suppose I can expect the usual eight bob a day."

"Oh, no, I couldn't let you go to work on that understanding. We usually start a man at six."

Finally he consented to make it seven, and I accepted the offer as the best I could get. I spent most of the day piling boards. Rafting didn't look like as roaring an adventure as it had seemed the Saturday previous, but I made up my mind to stay the week out, so as at least to get the money back that I had spent in looking for high wages in the tall timber. That evening I went to the nearest village and bought a week's supply of provisions. The company gave us our living quarters free, but every man had to provide and cook his food.

A sawmill is a place where a man's standing depends upon the number of fingers he has lost. The amount of service the men in our mill had seen could be gauged pretty exactly by observing their hands and making an average allowance of two years' work for each missing finger. Persons like myself and one or two other newcomers, who shamelessly exhibited whole hands, were set down contemptuously as tyros not worth the notice of battle-scarred veterans.

In addition to those of us at work in the mill, there was a bush gang back in the forest, hewing and sending out the logs. Around the mill were scattered the roughly built wooden shanties in which we lived, usually two in each *whare*. As a rule these huts had a single door and no windows. There was a fireplace at one end, with a chimney of rough lumber protected by an indifferent lining of sheet iron.

"A *whare* burns down every month or so," said my mate cheerfully, as he noted the effect of an armful of chips he had just thrown into our fireplace preparatory to starting supper.

"How about the men inside?"

"Oh, they gen'rally gets out. There's not much danger, only a man wants to jump quick for the door. He's got no time to hunt for the family photograph album."

"Supposing he's asleep."

"Well, a man as leaves his fire going at night ought to sleep light."

Although normally a light sleeper, I was at pains to put out our fire before I turned in that night.

After the trees had been cut down and trimmed in the bush, they were dragged by an ox team of ten or a dozen animals to a rough narrow-gauge track, laid into the forest as fast as the woodchoppers advanced. Thence the logs were hauled on wheels by four to half a dozen horses, driven tandem in the path between the rails. At the mill the logs were first turned over to two men for "breaking down." This meant sawing them lengthwise into convenient pieces, or flitches, and sliding them down to the benchman, who, with the assistance of a tailer-off at the other end of the saw, cut them into boards. The man doing the skidding then took them off the rests, or skids, and piled them according to size and quality about the yard. There was also a man for scabbing, or removing the waste pieces, and a sawduster to shovel the sawdust into a wheelbarrow and roll it away to the dump. An engineer was employed to keep the machinery going and a foreman to keep us going.

"Most likely they'll put you in as sawduster to-morrow," said my *whare* mate during the evening of my first day of work at the mill. "I hear the man who has the job is quitting."

"What sort of a job is it?"

"Well, it's all right for them as likes it," was the evasive response. I noted a flickering grin on my mate's face as he added, "You'll know more about it by to-morrow night."

Sure enough, I was installed as sawduster the next morning. Considerably before night I knew all I wanted to know about the job. And I didn't like it. Nobody else had liked it either — that's why I got it. The sawdust was disposed of in the same makeshift way in which everything about the place was done. It was simply dumped outside the mill, and had gradually accumulated until the sawduster had to push his wheelbarrow up an incline and run an obstacle race across a path of loose planks before he reached an available spot for dumping.

Doing this with a double-sized wheelbarrow filled with damp sawdust was no kindergarten sport. It would not have been so bad if one could have rested between loads, but in free moments one was expected to assist the skiddier, and in consequence there was a vacancy in the position of sawduster about every other week. I presume there is one there to-day. If so, it is open to any strong, willing man not afraid of work, one used to small wages preferred. None inclined to talk back to the boss need apply.

I made up my mind that if the work was unreasonable I would not simply call for my pay and slink off as the others had done. I was a free American citizen, and I proposed to let everybody know that I wouldn't do two men's work for seven shillings a day, nor a horse's work at any price.

The morning I was set to work as sawduster was an especially unfortunate one because the skiddier was sick and I was expected not merely to assist in that work, as usual, but practically to look after both jobs. I decided, though, that there should be no unseemly haste on my part, and the work soon began to pile up. I let it pile. Presently eight or ten small boards came sliding down from the saw at once. I picked up one and started off with it. The foreman was standing by.

"Take them all," he snarled.

"One is enough for me," I purred.

There was an ominous gleam in his eyes, but he made no further comment. It was a pity. I had a speech all ready for him which was itching for release. I never delivered that speech. It is for sale now at greatly reduced rates to any one who is looking forward to a career as sawduster.

When the whistle blew at noon the foreman beckoned to me.

"I saw the old man this morning, and he says he won't pay you seven bob a day. All he'll give is six. Your money is at the office if you want it."

After having once refused a wage of six shillings, I could not well accept it then, but I balked at the attempt to have me discharge myself. As there was no train by which I could leave for Wellington before the next morning, I decided I would finish out two full days of work and said so. The foreman shifted to the other foot and looked uneasy.

"In that case, you might have to wait for your pay. Besides, the old man said he wasn't entirely satisfied with you, so I wouldn't feel like keeping you on any longer."

"Right you are," I responded, glad at least to have forced him to accept the responsibility. "Pay me off."

Returning to the *whare*, I contemplated ruefully my week's stock of provisions, for which I should have no further use. I went into the bush fired by ambition; I came out of it fired by the boss. My experience had cost me about four times the amount of my wages, and I wrote down rafting as a failure.

XXII

I PLAY THE GENTLEMAN

We now no longer camp as for a night, but have settled down on earth and forgotten heaven.

— HENRY DAVID THOREAU

FROM the bush I went by railway to Wellington, the capital of New Zealand, to which I had had the clothing and other effects which I left at the Sailor's Home in Auckland forwarded. I dressed up in the best I had, and spent three weeks playing the gentleman while I went about talking with government officials, labor leaders, business men, and others in regard to the country's political and industrial experiments. After months at sea, on a farm, in the gold fields, and in the timber country, I am afraid I looked the part of a gentleman as little as I had looked that of a sailor when I presented myself at the dock of the *Lethington* in New York harbor. My financial situation was fully as dubious as my appearance. I had arrived in Napier, it will be remembered, with five pounds, a sum which I thought insufficient for my Wellington visit and to which I had essayed to add before arrival in the capital. I had succeeded only in reducing the five pounds substantially through traveling expenses and my adventure at Dannevirke.

No matter. I rented a room for five shillings a week in a humble private house, and did a good part of my eating there from purchases made at bakeries and grocery stores. In the morning I set out jauntily, camera in hand, posing as an American newspaper correspondent. Under the benignant protection of evening shadows I stole back to my obscure room with a sheaf of government reports under one arm and a loaf of bread under the other.

Anyhow, I got what I wanted. The Wellington of that day was an informal, rough-and-ready town, not unlike the capitals of some of our middle-western States. There were touches of the same pristine and unrestrained humor, the boisterous horseplay, which gave flavor to our earlier America. On the door of the headquarters of the Secretary of Labor I noted a placard: "Any person bringing Subscription Lists to this office will be shot", while in another place I encountered this legend:

NOTICE
When you have disposed of your
business
Please Trot!
We know all about the weather,
have read the newspapers,
and have a great deal of work to get through.

Imagine that in England's Whitehall Street! Or in modern Washington with its façade of swank and swagger!

I talked with most of the members of the Cabinet, and if any of them doubted my story or pretentions they concealed their skepticism until—

Until I called on the Prime Minister, Richard Seddon. "King Dick" was one of the most notable of Britain's Colonial premiers, probably the most so after Cecil Rhodes, sharing with the latter a rugged personality, tremendous energy, and great powers of popular leadership. Beginning life as a coal miner, he lifted himself by his boot straps, and although he originated less of New Zealand's advanced democracy than John Ballance and certain others, he supplied the motive power that realized the program. Eventually inflated with success, he developed a tendency to be pompous. He was that with me, I thought at the time, although from this distance it appears to me that he was not bluffing any more than I was — if as much.

I went to his house one afternoon and asked to take his photograph. He acceded cheerfully enough, posing in the doorway and in an arbor beside the house. But when I sought an interview he stood on his dignity.

"Have you any credentials?"

It was the first time that question had been put to me. I stretched out my hand and grabbed the first lie I could reach.

"Yes, but unfortunately only to persons in Australia. When I left home I was not expecting to visit New Zealand."

He peered at me sourly over the ramparts of an expansive waist line. I realized I had not been tactful in suggesting that my New Zealand visit was an afterthought, and hastened to better the impression.

"In Australia I heard so much about the progressive democracy of New Zealand that I decided my time would be better spent here than there."

"Um-m."

"Newspaper men don't bother much about credentials in America, and it didn't occur to me that they would be needed here."

"Um-m. I'll see. If I can give you any time, my secretary will send you word next week."

The word never came.

I realize now, and probably I did even then, that had I told the truth about myself, "King Dick" was just the man to have been immensely interested and pleased. I could have basked in a mild fame, had my story in the newspapers, given some talks on my travels, and passed the hat. But this was precisely what I wished to avoid. I wanted to go around the world as a bona fide workingman without recourse to other means of livelihood, and above all, without exploiting myself — as most others on similar journeys did — as a freak adventurer. I was willing to be a fictitious newspaper correspondent but not a fictitious workingman.

And although my finances were low, my spirits were high. In a letter written to my mother on the way to Wellington I said:

"In spite of various vicissitudes I am still pretty sound financially, and could advance you a few pounds if you are in any way pinched on account of the coal strike."

(The coal strike! Until I reread those words of more than a score of years back, I had not realized what an established, recurrent pestilence coal strikes have been.)

Upon arrival in Wellington I had found at the post office a money order from my (more or less) doting family. They thought in their kindness that I might be at the end of my tether by then, sick or discouraged, and in need of a financial bracer. I sent the money order back in a letter to my sister with the cavalier comment:

"I am returning the postal note, as I suppose you expected I would. I am doing so with thanks, however, and regret that the editors are often obliged to send back much excellent matter. You can save it until I get back to New York again and need it."

In the same letter I wrote of my recent experiences:

"For the past three weeks I have been quartered in Wellington as a real live gent. Upon arrival, I donned a collar and necktie for the first time since leaving home, and have been living in a room which I rented by the week, eating some of my meals there and others outside. By dint of much hustling I have now found out *all about* the political, industrial, social, and religious (not very full on the religious) life of the country.

"The chief difficulties have not been in the subject so much as in the circumstances, and for a double life mine could beat Dr. Jekyll's all hollow. By getting up very early in the morning I am able to sneak down town in my old clothes and get a sixpenny breakfast before official life is astir. A few hours later I can swell it down the main street in my best as the Special Commissioner of the American People, smoking cigars off the President of the Chamber of Commerce, while sitting in the directors' room with my feet on a plush sofa, and telling Dick Seddon (the Premier) to hold his chin in the air until I could get his picture.

"It had been my original intention upon finishing these investigations to get a job here until I found a ship going to Sydney. Experience has shown me, however, that this town is too small for one to pose one week as the Special Commissioner etc., etc., and go to work the next mixing drinks in some gin mill without embarrassing consequences. I am therefore going back to the bush."

So I shouldered my swag again, tramped into the country east of Wellington, and in the afternoon of the first day, as I recall it, spoke a man with a job to let.

"I want somebody to haul gravel from the river," he said, offering wages (I've forgotten how much) and my board.

"That suits me," I said, doubting if it would.

I hauled a couple of loads with his horse and cart before night, but found the harness almost falling to pieces and everything about the place dilapidated and down at the heel. That night I was assigned to a makeshift bed so short that the only way to rest myself was to sleep in sections, one part of my body at a time. It was no bunk for a back that has to shovel gravel all day. I quit right there, but I didn't say anything about it to the boss until after breakfast the next morning.

"I'm taking the road again," I announced, as we finished an unpalatable meal.

He looked as if he were accustomed to the announcement.

"What's the matter; work too hard?"

"No-o; bunk's too hard. . . . And too scarce."

That same morning I came upon the prospect of another job, this time more promising. A large, fertile farm. Many tidily kept acres. Numerous crops in the field. Apparently an abundance of work to be done.

"How much do you want?" asked one of three tall, stalwart, raw-boned brothers whom I found digging potatoes.

"A pound a week and all found." I was bidding for the top-notch wage for farm workers — and taking whatever I could get. Happily they did not realize this last. The three exchanged glances.

"Right you are," said one directly. "You can take off your coat and turn to picking up potatoes."

The three tall, stalwart, raw-boned brothers dug while I followed, dragging a bushel basket and gathering up the spuds. One of the trio helped me from time to time and I, in turn, assisted him in filling the sacks, which he tied and left prone on the field like dead soldiers. Nobody spoke. All dug. They dug as if they were unearthing nuggets of gold and could have only what they were able to turn up before noon. They dug as if the morrow were the Day of Judgment and they must finish the field before night or be condemned to eternal damnation. They dug . . . dug . . . dug. . . .

And I — I stooped and clawed . . . stooped and clawed . . . stooped and clawed. . . . Wasn't it dinner time yet? Had their watches stopped? Were they in too much of a hurry to pause to eat?

Finally a welcome call came from the house.

"Well, let's quit and go to dinner. We did twelve rows this morning. Wonder what they've got for us to eat? . . . You can wash up in that basin there."

I had dinner with the family, which consisted of the three brothers and their five sisters. The sisters were almost as tall and as stalwart, but fortunately not as raw-boned, as their brothers. All of the eight, who ranged from twenty to forty years of age, lived at home and all worked there on the farm except the youngest of the girls, who was a school-teacher.

"And none of you is married?" I asked in surprise.

"Not yet," grinned one of the brothers, the eldest of the group.

"How is that?"

"Maybe we don't want to and maybe we can't," said one of the girls gaily.

They all laughed. It was an odd but apparently a happy and successful group.

We had an excellent dinner and I was plied with food as urgently and repeatedly as if I had been a visiting relative with a large estate to be divided upon my death.

But there was no rest after dinner. When the last plate had been cleaned, the brothers rose; it was back to the potato field.

I stooped and clawed and picked up potatoes all afternoon, as the tall, stalwart, raw-boned brothers strode on ahead, turning up the hills with their spading forks. They never seemed to want to rest, although my back was as full of shooting pains as those one reads about in the patent-medicine advertisements. I picked up potatoes all afternoon; in my dreams I picked up potatoes all that night. I picked up potatoes all the next day; I picked up potatoes all the next week. I grew to loathe the thought of potatoes and would have desecrated the grave of Parmentier or whoever it was that made popular the lowly spud.

The farm was primarily a market garden, supplying produce to Wellington. There were also fifteen milk cows, but with the three brothers, myself, and one or two of the girls taking a hand, the milking was not much of a chore. Except for the day-long torture in the potato field, I was treated royally. I not only ate with the family but was invited into the sitting room to read in the evenings, and one Sunday the younger two of the sisters asked me if Americans played tennis.

"Yes, quite a bit."

"Do you play yourself?"

"Oh, I can knock a ball around the court a little," I answered with becoming (although not undue) deprecation.

"Wouldn't you like to go with us for a game at our club?"

So I, the casual farm hand, went to the tennis club where, as I wrote home, I met and played with a young lady who was reputed to be "the belle of the Hutt Valley." Who this belle was, or what the beauty championship of the Hutt Valley amounted to, I haven't now the slightest idea, but the incident evidently impressed me at the time.

At last the potato digging was done. I felt about done too and thought I had earned the right to take it easy for a while. I was set at various odd jobs alone; and without the three tall, stalwart, raw-boned brothers to pace me, my accomplishments didn't measure up to what they expected for a pound a week. So a couple of weeks later I was paid off and took the road again, with the cordial best wishes of the five sisters and the not-quite-so-cordial good wishes of the three t., s., and r.-b. brothers.

They were certainly prodigious workers, those brothers. I should rather have them work for me than work for them in Kingdom Come.

XXIII

Cook in a Sixpenny Hash Foundry

Therefore, from job to job I've moved along,
Pay couldn't 'old me when my time was done,
For something in my 'ead upset me all,
Till I 'ad dropped whatever 'twas for good,
An', out at sea, be'eld the dock-light die,
An' met my mate — the wind that tramps the world.
— Rudyard Kipling

I returned to Wellington to wait for a chance to ship to Australia, for I had tramped over a good part of the North Island of New Zealand and felt that rather than visit the South Island I should prefer to explore Never-Never Land. Some weeks had elapsed since my venture in Wellington as a gentleman, and I was less troubled about encountering my former associates. I recalled a restaurant where I had taken meals at sixpence each. I should be as little likely to meet friends of my prosperity there as any place, I reflected, and so applied for work as a waiter.

"Can you cook?" asked the proprietor hopefully.

"What kind of cooking do you want?"

"I want a second cook. We don't need any waiters."

Here was a job pleading to be taken. The fact that I knew practically nothing of cooking appeared to me as an irrelevant technicality.

"I'll take it on."

Considering the price, we served a surprisingly good meal. It was too good — that's where the trouble lay. We had to resort to various expedients in order to keep appearances up and expenses down. For the benefit of persons conducting or dining at twelve-cent restaurants I set down a few hints let fall from time to time by the chef:

"For Christ's sake in putting meat on a man's plate, never cover one piece with another. Spread it out — like that — so as to make it look as much as possible."

"Always prepare for a small breakfast and a big dinner Sundays. Sixpenny patrons lie abed Sunday morning so as to save money, and they eat two blooming meals in one when they show up at noon."

"Mind you, if you slop over the edge of a plate in dishing up food for a lady, always wipe if off with your finger. Men don't care, but women are fussy about those things."

"So that fellow sent his plate back because his fried fish was burnt, did he? Well, wallop the piece over, other side up, and let the bounder have it again; it ain't burnt so bad on the other side."

One morning I burned some mutton chops so that the charred remains were almost beyond identification. It was a rule of the house never to throw away a piece of meat, but I felt that any person who received a couple of such burnt offerings would take the action as tantamount to a request to withdraw his patronage.

"What shall we do?" I asked the chef.

"Give him one of those chops and one good one." The chef was standing by the open slide to the dining room and spoke in a voice which penetrated to every table. The laugh that floated back suggested that the technique of a sixpenny restaurant was as well understood on one side of the kitchen door as on the other.

On the bill of fare for dinner there appeared regularly both sago and tapioca pudding. While I was in the place no tapioca was ever seen in the kitchen, but there was an abundance of sago, and both kinds were served from the same dish. This worked all right until a waiter came to the slide and called out, "Lady says she wants an order of puddin' half sago an' half tapioca."

For a moment I was stumped; then an inspiration came.

"Tell her the tapioca's all out," I said aloud, adding under my breath to the waiter, "and has been ever since I've been in this hash foundry."

When I entered the service of the restaurant it had an apparently profitable clientele of from one hundred to two hundred persons, mostly laborers on the near-by docks. At the end of three weeks the patronage had dwindled alarmingly. I do not say this was due to the second cook. I merely state the facts. For several days the boss looked worried, and one morning he broke the bad news.

"I've taken in the sign out in front. We're not opening the doors again."

The *Moeraki* of the Union Steamship Company was to leave the next day for Sydney. I decided to return to Australia in her, even if I had to pay my passage, which I was now able to do, having received a pound a week and my board in the restaurant. There would not have been much left upon arrival in Australia, though, so I wanted to work my way over if possible. I had been told that the Union Steamship Company didn't allow persons to work their way, which was not surprising because its runs were so short as to make a passage man more of a nuisance than help. Just the same I hunted up the mate of the *Moeraki* and told him the best hard-luck story I could muster.

"Get your bag and come aboard," he answered, much to my surprise.

I returned to the restaurant and went to the boss.

"I'd like my pay for last week. I'm leaving for Australia in the morning."

He hemmed a little and said he didn't have the money but would try to get it by night. He did and paid me off. I didn't realize at the time that the other employees hadn't yet been paid and possibly wouldn't be, but evidently they did, for I heard the chef growling from another room as I packed my dunnage.

"There's Yankee hustle for you," he sputtered. "That bloke finds a ship, gets the boss to pay him 'is screw, and is off to Australia w'ile the rest of us is settin' around w'istlin' fer our pay an' wonderin' w'at we're bloomin' well goin' to do next."

There was both spleen and admiration in the chef's voice. With that blessed human capacity for seeing oneself in the most favorable light, I accepted the admiration as my due, rejected the spleen as unjustified, and hurried for the dock.

Another man had been allowed to work his passage because he was a former employe. The two of us were put not in the forecastle but in the second cabin. We were called at five o'clock in the morning and we helped scrub decks until eight. The rest of the day was occupied with light tasks, and at five o'clock in the afternoon we knocked off and returned to the second-cabin saloon with nothing more to do but lounge about with the passengers and sit down to a supper served by stewards in evening dress. So for the four days of the passage.

"I wonder if it's true," speculated my fellow passage man on the last night before we reached Sydney, "if we live in a world where it is impossible to get something for nothing."

I don't recall what I replied then, but my guess to-day would be that we live in a world where, in spite of a popular idea to the contrary, it is fairly easy to get something for nothing, still easier to get nothing for something, but difficult beyond all hope of realization to get even approximately one's desserts, or remotely to determine what they should be.

XXIV

AUSTRALIA AGAIN

It stretches from the open sea
To the blue mountains and beyond;
The world is Vagabondia
To him who is a vagabond.

— BLISS CARMAN

NEXT to that of Rio de Janeiro, I have heard sailors say, the harbor of Sydney is the most beautiful in the world. They are thinking chiefly, I take it, of natural beauties. If one considers the craftsmanship of man, it seems to me that the port of New York is incomparably the most eye-dazzling, brain-stirring spectacle upon which one can come from the deep. And even when one thinks chiefly of natural beauties, many would dispute the supremacy of Rio and Sydney. For my own part I might suggest as competitors the azure, mountain-rimmed harbor of Naples; the port of Palermo, sunning itself below the waving lemon groves of the Conca d'Oro; or the roadstead of St. Thomas in the Virgin Islands, with its great gaunt mountain rising so close and precipitously behind the town as almost to tumble it off into the water. Yet the harbor of Sydney is beautiful — a progressive and cumulative beauty as one stems the long, narrow bay framed with rugged hills upon which verdant forests come right down to the water's edge to drink.

Melbourne and Sydney are rival cities for the leadership of Australia. Sydney is the older and to me was the more appealing. Melbourne, like many of our mid-western cities, was laid out with a T-square and yardstick, a succession of regular blocks and wide streets. Sydney, like Pittsburgh, was dropped among hills, about which it has rambled and over which it has climbed in erratic lanes and sudden flights of steps — a municipal problem and a pictorial delight.

Arriving in Sydney with money in my pockets, I followed the same course as upon first reaching Wellington. I rented a room in a private house and spent a couple of weeks talking with leading citizens about Australia. I visited at his law office Sir George H. Reid, who had been the first Prime Minister of the Commonwealth and was its favorite platform orator; I talked with John Watson, then the leader of the Labor group in Parliament and later — when his party came into power — Prime Minister. I collected government reports and other documents by the armful, ploughing diligently through their contents at night.

The owner of the house in which I lived knew the Colonies well, and I found his judgments interesting.

"Australia is a land of abnormalities and extremes," he remarked one evening. "At some times and in some places it sizzles with heat. Then again, where the latitude wouldn't seem to warrant it, the climate is piercingly cold. There are regions where it is always raining and great stretches of parched desert where water never falls. The animals are mostly marsupials — kangaroos, wallabies, and such — a family scarcely known in other parts of the world. There is a bird with a voice like a man — the great kingfisher or laughing jackass."

"Yes," I broke in, "and I have heard that there are white crows and cherries whose stones grow on the outside."

"Maybe," he laughed, "but if I were you, I shouldn't spend too much time looking for them."

There was the same tendency toward abnormalities and extremes in government as in nature, he said. "Social experiments which have been moderately and successfully put in motion in New Zealand have been pressed too fast and too far here."

In spite of its youthful civilization, Australia presented the most extreme form of the "city problem" anywhere to be found, my landlord went on to say.

"The tendency here is just opposite to that in New Zealand, where you found the people keen to get on the land. Practically speaking, New Zealand has only four cities — Auckland, Wellington, Christchurch, and Dunedin — containing, all told, scarcely more than a fourth of the population. But look at the State of South Australia! Almost half of the people live in one city, Adelaide, and nearly as high a proportion of the inhabitants of Victoria are in Melbourne. We can't get our people to leave the cities — all on the coast — and go out into the back blocks."

It had been my hope to see for myself something of those "back blocks", the vast stretches of Never-Never Land where a few men lived among thousands of sheep, or mile after mile rolled away uninhabited and unused. But, as I told in an earlier chapter, Australia was under the curse of a great and long-continued drought. The sheep country, always arid, had been sucked dry by days upon days of scorching sun and almost no relieving rain. The land lay withered and parched and browned, looking up appealingly but vainly at an implacable and relentless dome of glittering blue, through which a grinning, jeering sun burned its daily path, darting the while its blistering rays upon a shrinking and defeated earth.

"Drought is the scourge of Australia," my landlord truly said. "Here we have a continent almost as big as the United States but with a population of only six million persons. Almost all of them live in the fringe of watered, fertile country that skirts the coast. There are miles and miles of land in the interior almost or quite unsettled. Some of it is hopeless desert, but mostly it has just enough rain in normal years to support sheep. Only it seems as if blessed few years *were* normal — at least lately. Generally droughts come and go at intervals of a good many years. This one came but it doesn't go."

"Can't they do anything to save the sheep in time of drought?" I asked. "Couldn't they be driven to water somewhere?"

"It isn't just water; it's food too. The ground is baked and the forage is shrivelled and scorched and blasted. Where there was once sparse grass, there are now only dried tufts; what used to be wavy green scrub has become khaki-colored brush, rattling and hissing in the wind.

"No, they can't do anything for the sheep, and the sheep can't do anything for themselves but loll out their tongues, lie down in their tracks, and die. The Mount Murchison and Momba station on the Darling and Paroo rivers, one of the largest in New South Wales, used to shear three hundred thousand sheep. This year it has forty thousand. Some sheep runs have been abandoned entirely. In all, the flocks of New South Wales have been reduced from sixty million sheep to a pitiful twenty million. The havoc to the cattle herds of Queensland has been even worse."

My landlord's description reminded me of some lines I had seen by Walter Smith, an Australian who wrote under the name of Old Saltbush:

In the great stream beds, muddy holes
Where once was water deep

Are filled with rotting carcasses
Of cattle and of sheep;
Along the banks in ghastly groups
(Full half their number gone)
The starving stock all feebly crawl,
Poor wrecks of skin and bone.

This was the picture of the "back blocks", as drawn for me by others, in a time that men spoke of as the Great Drought. Alas, the phrase hardly identifies it at this distance, for Australia has had more than one "great drought." Every generation capitalizes as such its supreme disaster.

In spite of — perhaps because of — the sad plight of inland Australia at the time of the Great Drought, I should have liked to see something of it. But distances were great, my purse was small, and it would have been absurd to expect work or a kindly reception as a swag man. So when I had seen enough of Sydney I set out for Newcastle, a hundred miles farther north, whence I hoped to ship for San Francisco or some other port on the Pacific Coast of the United States.

"You're not likely to get a ship here in Sydney," a captain of a sailing vessel in the harbor had told me. "Except in the wool season most of the ships coming to Australian ports go in ballast to Newcastle to take a cargo of coal for Honolulu, Frisco or the West Coast." At sea the West Coast means South America. "They don't sign an outward-bound crew until they're ready to leave Newcastle."

"Are there many ships leaving there for Frisco?"

"Lots of them. . . . But there are ten sailors for every place," the skipper added with a laugh. "The beach is barnacled with them. You stand a good chance to get stuck there yourself."

"But I hear there is quite a fleet of American schooners — three and four-masters — bringing lumber out from the Pacific Coast and taking coal back. As an American, I would have a preference on them."

"Oh, well, in that case maybe you'll make out all right."

In order to see something of the country, I walked the first half of the way to Newcastle, falling in for a while with another swag man. We passed many orange groves with the harvest ripe on the trees. It made our mouths water.

"We've got to get our share somehow," I observed.

"Right you are," my companion responded eagerly, "but they're too well fenced and too well watched around here. We'll have to wait for a better chance."

Presently a better chance came.

"Here's a fence we can get under," said my fellow swagger. "If we crawl through that bit of scrub on our bellies, nobody can see us from the house."

We wormed under the fence, wriggled our way for a couple of hundred yards on our stomachs, and came up under a well loaded tree out of sight of the house. I began stuffing my pockets with fruit while my companion, more of an opportunist, bit at once into the largest orange he could reach. Then he waited for me to try one. Having filled my pockets and made sure that nobody was approaching from the house, I gathered several fat fellows and prepared for a feast. At the first mouthful I understood why my companion in evil had not been stripping the boughs more energetically. We looked at each other and simultaneously tossed our oranges into the scrub with a vicious heave.

"I was thinking it over while crawling out here," I remarked, "and I came to the conclusion that it would not be honest to take these oranges without permission."

"I agree with you," was the answer. "When I think of the Sunday schooling I had as a lad, I'm surprised I ever thought of stealing oranges. . . . They're sourer than the wrath of God," he added as his mouth twitched in an involuntary pucker. "No wonder they don't need to be watched. Sucking them is like drinking out of the Dead Sea."

We wriggled back to the road in silence.

I parted with my walking mate before dark, as we were taking different ways, and in spite of the fact that I was in a country of orange groves, I had a cold night rolled in my blanket in the midst of a great forest of blue gums.

The blue gum is one of the most ordinary trees of Australia and has no standing there for beauty. Yet I came to have a great liking for it, and recall to-day with emotion the bald, cream-colored trunks rising gaunt and skeleton-like, bearing aloft a tapestry of leaves quivering against a wall of sun-filled blue sky. But for me the delight of the blue gum was even more in sound than in sight. The leaves of other trees rustle; those of the blue gum crackle and cackle in the dry Australian winds. No other leaves which I know are so talkative, so eloquent, although those of the American poplar are a not distant second.

As it was the winter season, the leaves in the blue-gum forest where I spent the night were dry and brittle. They hissed and shouted on the branches above; they lay in whispering masses and windrows on the ground. I gathered them up by the armful for a bed, and lit a fire in a cleared space at considerable danger of setting the forest ablaze, since the leaves were not only dry but still filled with the pungent oil that is characteristic of the eucalyptus.

The fire was for companionship as well as warmth, for the loneliness of the forest oppressed me, while distant calls of wild animals and — so at least I thought — their movements in the bushes nearer by suggested the possibility of prowling and unpleasant visitors. I had studied up on the fauna of New Zealand before going ashore there, and could sleep in its woods, secure that I would not be molested by anything dangerous. But I had neglected to do as much by Australia. Did its forests contain wolves or bears, I asked myself? Or wild cats? At that thought I threw more sticks on the fire, disregarding the danger of sparks carrying to the near-by leaves. Australia had kangaroos, I knew. . . .

I fell asleep wondering if kangaroos bit.

In the early years of this century Newcastle, New South Wales, was the Port of the Windjammers. Never before had I seen such a network of spars and rigging within so limited a space. The harbor was small but well sheltered, and from the hills of the city it appeared as a blurred spider-web of sticks and strings dotted with the flags of England, America, Germany, France, Italy, Norway, Denmark, Greece, and almost every other maritime nation of the world. I doubt if any other city of scarcely more than twenty-five thousand inhabitants was visited by so many sailing ships, certainly not by those of so many nations.

It was to the able fleet of smart, new American schooners, bringing lumber from the Pacific Coast and loading coal for Honolulu, thence sugar for home, that I pinned my hope of returning to the United States. Indeed it was more than a hope; it was an unclouded assurance. As an American I assumed that I would be entitled to preference if there were any vacancies in crews, and that at least I could get a chance to work a passage. In fact I was under the impression that it would suffice to step aboard, puff out my chest, say proudly, "I am an American" — and in a few months I would be in my own country again.

I entered the office of the American consul, serene in that impression. I made my exit feeling like the young man who, sent out by his employer to get orders for the firm, came back with the announcement that he had got two.

"What were they?" asked the boss, eagerly.

"The first was to get out, and the second was to stay out."

In the parlance of the writing guild I withdrew from the consulate crestfallen. In current street lingo I got the "bum's rush." The consul asked me practically only one question. After my answer to that, he monopolized the conversation until I felt it was time to go. He asked me, "Have you a discharge from an American ship here in the Colonies?"

"No, I was on a British ship and was in too much of a hurry to stop for a discharge. But I'm an American citizen and I — "

"I don't care if you're twenty American citizens. I don't care if you're the entire voting population of the State of Indiana. There are a thousand sailors on the beach in Newcastle, all trying to get to the Pacific Coast and away from hard times in Australia. This office is interested only in sailors off American ships who've got discharges here in Australia, whether they're Polaks, Hottentots, Chinamen, or chimpanzees."

I had another surprise soon after arriving in Newcastle. While wandering along the water front, I was stopped by two men who wanted to know who I was and what I was doing. I failed to see how it was their business and in readily understandable language told them so.

"It's our business, young fellow, because we're detectives," said one of them, revealing a badge inside his coat. "And unless you show us pretty quick w'y not, you're liable to find yourself w'ere the air ain't so good as out 'ere. Understand?"

Fortunately I had some letters and other papers in my pocket which I produced for inspection.

"You don't seem to be 'im," one of the detectives concluded presently. "We're lookin' fer a Yank of about your cut to give 'im a passage back to the States."

They moved off without giving further details, leaving me a little sorry that I had been so quick to satisfy them. If they were looking for some one wanted in the United States for murder, it would have been capital strategy to allow myself to be sent home at government expense and then show my innocence. But perhaps it was all for the best. I had more faith in our courts then than now. Even if the evidence didn't justify it, they might have hanged me to get the worth of their money.

A few days spent in tramping the waterfront in search of a job aboard a ship bound for the Pacific Coast convinced me that I stood no chance. American schooners were practically out of the question, I had learned from the consul. There were few openings aboard other vessels — forewarned of hard times, sailors were sticking by their ships — and there were scores of applicants for every job. Then, too, a foreign ship, unlike an American vessel, would not pay off its crew upon reaching the Pacific Coast of the United States. I should have to clear out, penniless, with three thousand miles overland between me and New York. Since beginning my adventure, I had already quit two ships, without leave and without wages; I didn't care to develop the method into a habit. I felt that there was a good deal of sense in the advice contained in a letter from my brother, who suggested that henceforward I should take as my watchword, "Don't give up the ship."

It seemed best, therefore, to try for a vessel back to New Zealand, where work was plenty and there were opportunities at least to work a passage to London, whence it would be easy to get across the Atlantic Ocean. Meanwhile it was necessary to do something, for my money was dwindling fast toward nothing. There seemed to be no work in Newcastle. It was impossible to go inland to hunt it and watch for a ship at the same time.

I fell back upon the recourse of innumerable tramps before me — I went into the Salvation Army.

XXV

WITH THE SALVATION ARMY

Oh, be humble, my brother, in your prosperity! Be gentle with those who are less lucky, if not more deserving. Think, what right have you to be scornful, whose virtue is a deficiency of temptation, whose success may be a chance, whose rank may be an ancestor's accident, whose prosperity is very likely a satire.

—"VANITY FAIR"

ALONG the waterfront in Newcastle the Salvation Army maintained what was known as the Workingmen's Hotel. The name was inexact, for the place was frequented less by men who were working than by ones who were either looking for employment or trying their hardest to get along without it. Since it was by far the cheapest place in town in which to live, I naturally gravitated to this haven, and as my funds approached the vanishing point I was seized suddenly with religious zeal. I inquired minutely in regard to the Sunday services; I studied the Bible texts on the walls (when any of the officers were looking); I talked with the sergeants on religious questions; with clock-like regularity I attended the evening gospel meetings, sitting in the front row, singing at the top of my voice, clapping my hands to the music when the leader did, shouting a pious ejaculation whenever opportunity offered.

"Nobody is too deep in the mire to be saved," exhorted the leader.

"Hallelujah!" I burst forth ecstatically.

"There's a way out for all."

"Amen!" I roared fervidly.

"The blood of the Lamb will wash you whiter than snow."

"Glory be to God!" I bellowed in a frenzy of abandon, and then swung lustily in behind the leader, as he nodded to the girl at the organ, spread out his arms, threw back his head, and launched the song:

Wha-iter than snow,
Yes, wha-iter than snow.

The stuffy little room began to throb with his emotion. It glowed with his reflected heat. A chorus of muddy voices, some sheepishly, some boldly, all raucously, joined in:

Wash me and I shall be
Wha-iter than snow.

The leader dragged a tousled handkerchief across his perspiring forehead, relapsed into the spoken word, and went on with his appeal to the faces before him, some of them rollicking, some dull, some dispirited, some defeated (a good many without ever having tried). He spoke energetically and earnestly, actuated by I hardly know what motives. I seconded him energetically and earnestly with my hallelujahs and amens, actuated by I knew precisely what motives. I had reached my last shilling.

After a few days' preliminary campaign it was my intention to ask for a job, relying upon my piety as a recommendation. So convincing was my conduct that I was spared the trouble of asking. One of the sergeants offered me a berth.

"What would you say to a job in the hotel, washing dishes and cleaning up? There's only six shillings a week in pay, but you get your bed and board."

"It suits me right down to the Plimsoll mark," I replied, forgetting my religious pose and reverting to the sea. "Sign me on. I'm about capsized financially."

"I thought so," said the sergeant. "I notice you haven't been eating very hearty. You can begin now if you like."

Excepting members of the Salvation Army, there were only four employes, including myself, in the hotel. We four unregenerates manned the scullery and did the dirty work. I found myself at home immediately, for the three others who shared my duties turned out to be, like myself, sailors on the beach, temporary recruits to the hosts of the Lord while looking for a ship in which to sign under another master.

"You're another goddam Yank, ain't yuh?" was how Joe greeted me. "Shake; I'm one myself. So's Jim here. I can't make out how us three all come tuh land here together."

Neither could I. It was surely an odd chance, for Americans, at least the native born, were rarely met with among deep-water sailors. Nor were they, sailors or landsmen, often encountered ashore in the antipodes. Previously I had run across only two of my countrymen in all my knocking about in New Zealand and Australia.

"Six bob a week ain't much fer paintin' the town, but after yuh been here a week there's nothin' left tuh paint if they'd give yuh the key tuh the U. S. Mint," observed Jim.

"Six bob ain't any Rockefeller income," admitted Joe, "but there's yer bunk an' bunkers besides. That's a lot. It's a long sight better 'n' climbin' over ship's sides askin' fer handouts, you c'n bet yer sweet life."

"The bunkers ain't nothin' tuh shout about an' a menagerie is thrown in with yer bunk," objected Jim.

Joe retorted contemptuously.

"There yuh go kickin' again. You'll kick in heaven because there's no angel tuh carry yer harp an' the soup is cold at the Lord's Supper."

The Workingmen's Hotel consisted of two departments, the threepenny and the sixpenny, with a yawning gulf between them socially. In the sixpenny department you could get a comfortable cot bed in a special dormitory for sixpence. (At least the cots looked comfortable. I never had the privilege of sleeping in such luxury.) For ninepence you could bask in the sybaritic pleasure of a room to yourself. And for sixpence you could get an excellent meal in a special dining room, served by Salvation Army lassies who kept themselves and everything else clean and neat.

We four sailors and sinners washed the dishes for the entire hotel, but otherwise our duties were solely with the threepenny department, and it was with its socially inferior patrons that we ate and slept. The sleeping quarters at threepence were in a huge dormitory with rows of bunks in two tiers, upper and lower. We four sailors made the beds by day and acted as monitors at night. A couple of times a week we scrubbed the floor. In the threepenny dining room every man called for his food at a counter, eating according to the condition of his finances. The menu, which was chalked on a blackboard, used to be this:

Tea	½ d.
Bread and butter	½ d.
Soup	½ d.
Porridge	1 d.
Pudding	1 d.
Meat, tea, bread and butter	3 d.

There was not much butter on the bread, nor much milk in the tea, but considering the price, one was surprisingly well served and, if necessary, could live on an incredibly small sum a day.

Perhaps it may seem from the description of our tasks that we sailors must have been kept pretty busy. On the contrary, we hurried the work along so as to have most of the afternoon free and all of the evening, except that we had to take turns as ticket-taker and bouncer at the entrance to the threepenny dormitory during the hours set for admission.

"Don't let any bum git by without a ticket fer his bed," Joe instructed, "an' don't let in no drunks. Sometimes a bunch'll come together an' try tuh rush yuh. While you're holdin' up one the rest'll run upstairs. Slug 'em if they try it, an' holler fer help if yuh need it."

"Don't they ever let in anybody free if he hasn't the price?"

"Sure they do. But he's gotta git a ticket from the lieutenant er one o' the sergeants before he goes upstairs. If he ain't got his pasteboard, throw him tuh hell out in the street."

Joe's talk was always of "strong arm" methods, but in practice he was no more violent than the rest of us, and we rarely had trouble. Drunken men were our chief bother. We were a little lenient with those who were quiet, even when they appeared to be tipsy, but we took no chances with the noisy. Several times we had to put them out even after they had gone upstairs. A dormitory in which a hundred or more men are sleeping is never precisely an abode of silence. We didn't grumble about snoring (although some of our patrons did); we were lenient toward a man who wanted to indulge in a mild nightmare; but we drew the line when any one insisted upon making an oration or even carrying on a protracted conversation with himself.

"Every traveller," says the Autocrat of the Breakfast Table, "is a self-taught entomologist." In wanderings in my own country I had become pretty well acquainted with most, if not all, the inhabitants of the insect world which have picked upon mankind as their favorite food (bad as humanity may be, it is comforting to reflect that large groups of apparently discriminating insects hold it in the most heartfelt esteem), but I had never encountered more than one or two kinds at the same time. Here they were all assembled together; I had an opportunity to study them comparatively and according to the inductive method of research, with unrivalled laboratory facilities. It was a liberal if not a pleasurable education. Like corporal punishment it mortified the flesh but it elevated the spirit. At least, so I hope.

In my deep-sea travels thus far (and it proved true throughout my entire journey around the world) I had been spared the attentions of insects. In anticipation I had feared that would not be true, as earlier experiences in New England fishing schooners had not been reassuring. But it is part of the creed of the deep-water sailor, at least on British ships, to keep himself and the forecastle free of vermin. Ashore, too, in the Colonies, I had been fortunate generally to get a clean bed, even in the places of minimum expense to which I usually went.

Under the hospitable roof of the Salvation Army (generously accepting all comers, human or inhuman) I learned for the first time in my life what it was to be lousy. Previous encounters with the insect tribe had by some miracle never included this experience, and in my innocence I did not at first know what the source of my annoyance was. I sought the more expert advice of my sailor companions and was enlightened, whereupon I am happy to record the Salvation Army removed the trouble by putting my clothing in its fumigator.

I have said that there were four of us sailors and sinners working for the Salvation Army, three of whom were Americans. We three Yanks dominated the scene, the Stars and Stripes waving so exclusively and exultantly in the scullery and the threepenny dormitory that I cannot now recall the least detail about the fourth member of the quartet, who was so unblessed as to be of another nationality — whatever it may have been. But Joe and Jim are still clear and dear to memory.

As already suggested, Joe's bark was worse than his bite. I recall him as a stockily built youngster with a freckled face, a short nose, and a gray-blue eye that suggested Irish ancestry.

"I left home when I was only a kid," he explained to Jim and me, "an' have been in about every navy in South America. I'd been in the Chilean just before I jumped a ship fer this hole."

"But ain't the term o' service several years in them South American navies?" inquired Jim. "How have yuh made out tuh be in so many?" Joe didn't appear to be much more than twenty years of age.

"Oh, the term o' service? Sure it's fer several years. But . . . you see . . . I never bother about that. When I git full up, I quit an' move along. That way one can cover consid'rable ground. So I've seen a bit o' about all the navies south o' the Isthmus of Panama, an' in fact begun on a second round."

Jim must have been of about the same age as Joe, with less bluster and brag but a smoldering brown eye that often told more than his tongue. He was a tolerably recent emigré from his home in San Francisco.

"I sorta got tired o' slattin' about the streets o' Frisco," he said, "an' got a berth as ordinary seaman on an American sailin' ship round the Horn tuh New York. It wasn't bad. I got along all right, but I jest natur'ly cleared out in New York. I went broke an' started tuh look fer a ship back tuh Frisco, an' some un got me drunk, an' the next I knew I was shanghaied on an English bark an' didn't see land agin till she dropped her hook in Sydney. There I jest natur'ly runs away agin an' comes here tuh Newcastle lookin' fer a ship back tuh the States. An' here I am on the beach, washin' dishes an' makin' beds fer the Salvation Army until God knows when — I don't."

Jim and I found a good deal in common, and often went out together during our free time in the afternoons. Other than the water front there was no place to go. Newcastle was a town of one street. Practically speaking, there were no others. Neither was there anything else. Although one of the greatest gathering places of sailors in the world, Newcastle had — in the town proper, at least — no sailor's institute, no public library, no reading room, no place of any kind where a moneyless wayfarer could go to enjoy himself, or so much as sit down to rest. When one tired of walking the streets with his hands in his pockets, he could find variety by sitting on the wharf edge and kicking his heels together.

Jim and I usually hunted up a sunny corner about the docks and sat down to see the ships, nearly always one or two and sometimes half a dozen, leaving port. We watched them grow whiter and whiter as one sail after another was broken out, accumulating bulk and momentum like a snowball, and we were moved to lamentable language as they slipped out of the harbor's mouth toward "God's Country" — without us.

"Have you ever been to see the consul?" I inquired of Jim one afternoon.

"Yes, . . . once."

"I see," I replied. "He told me the same thing."

"No, he ses worse than that tuh me. He ses I was all-fired lucky not tuh be clapped in the cooler. . . . It's a rum go. Here we are, two genuine Americans stranded in a stranger's country. Yet every day whitewashed Americans, an' them as isn't even that, are gittin' berths out o' here aboard our nation's ships. Cripes! It's a rum go."

"Yes, it's a rum go," I assented. "It isn't the consul's fault though. Under the law your nationality doesn't matter. All that counts is whether your last discharge was from an American ship."

After a few weeks with the Salvation Army I decided to be "saved." I record the details with no pride and some shame. As I see it now, my action was a poor return to a group of persons who had treated me with kindness and consideration. For it was actuated neither by necessity nor religious conviction. My earlier manifestations of zeal were justifiable, I think, because at that time I needed a living, and self-preservation is the first law of nature. But I undertook to be "saved" gratuitously, after a job had been given me and without any suggestion that more acute religious symptoms would be required in order to retain it. No pressure was ever put upon us in the scullery to lead lives of greater grace, nor to take part in the religious work unless we chose. As a rule we attended the after-supper gospel service in the hotel, partly out of policy and partly because we had nothing else to do. Sometimes, too, we followed the band through the main street later in the evening to the hall where the night meeting took place. But none of this was ever made to seem mandatory.

No, I undertook to be "saved" unnecessarily and inexcusably. Pure perversity and a contemptible yellow streak dictated my course. I wanted to see the Salvation Army at closer range, to view it from inside. Though the lieutenant and the sergeants were always affable to us of the scullery, we were in no way taken into the family; we were made to realize that we belonged not to the company of "saints" but to the multitude of "sinners." And the women folk never gave us a word or a nod.

Yes, you see I am coming to it at last. A number of attractive Salvation Army girls acted as waitresses in the sixpenny dining room. The hope of making headway among them was, I suspect, the mainspring which pressed me to be "saved."

Anyhow, I accompanied the band through the main street one night, sat through the meeting, and showed a receptive attitude when two of the sisters made a double flank attack upon my soul, one sitting down on one side of me and another on the other.

"Don't you want to come to Jesus?"

"You'll feel a great deal happier if you do."

"No matter how much of a sinner you've been, all you have to do is ask and you will be forgiven."

"Don't put it off; to-morrow may be too late."

After a reasonable show of resistance I allowed myself to be led forward to the mourners' bench.

Early the next morning the youngest of the sergeants (he had not been at the meeting the night before but had already learned of the lamb brought into the fold) came to me in the threepenny dormitory, gripped me mightily by the hand, and presented a regulation cap and a "blood and fire" guernsey (a red sweater with the Salvation Army insignia knit on the breast in gold). The sergeant left me rather in a daze, but it was nothing compared to what was to come. Directly after breakfast, when I had gone to the scullery for the usual bout with the dishes, the young sergeant reappeared.

"They're waiting for you at the prayer meeting in the office," he announced.

The members of the Salvation Army who worked and lived in the hotel had a devotional service every morning after breakfast. As the waitresses in the sixpenny dining room attended this, it had often been my wish on previous days that I might go too, but my enthusiasm at the moment was about that of a condemned man for the gallows.

"We're glad to have you with us," said the lieutenant, rising and shaking me by the hand when I entered the room. The others followed his example, even the hitherto inaccessible sixpenny waitresses greeting me with cordial smiles. There was a Bible reading and a song, after which the lieutenant beamed in my direction.

"We'd like to hear a testimony from you," he said kindly.

I could have cut him in fine bits there and then and scattered the pieces with relish over every square yard of the harbor. But I had come unarmed. So I looked at the sixpenny waitresses to draw courage (somehow they didn't seem as attractive as they had), and did my best. It must have been pretty sad. Everybody had a kind word for me as we separated, but I felt their lack of enthusiasm.

Back in the scullery it was still worse. Jim was disposed to stick by me with a kind of grieved compassion, but Joe was openly sneering and resentful.

"I suppose yuh think we're goin' tuh do yer work while you're in there doin' that come-to-Jesus stuff, do yuh? *Christ!*"

Joe ripped the last word out in any but a devotional tone and glared at me across a sink full of soapy water, in which his arms were immersed to the elbows.

"Yuh can't come no psalm-singin' game on me," Joe continued in disgust. "I'll do my whack o' the work an' then quit."

He spat vindictively on the floor, and then thoughtfully wiped out the evidence with the sole of his shoe.

"He ain't tryin' tuh git out o' no work. What the hell!" Jim was coming to my defence. "Religion ain't a bad thing. We don't live the way we oughta. We'd all be better off if we'd knock off swearin' an' drinkin' an' runnin' around with tarts."

"It's a helluva lotta runnin' round with tarts you do, Bo, on six measly bob a week," Joe sneered.

Jim's pride was offended. "Well — I do my best," he said with dignity.

Whereupon we dropped the altercation and finished the morning's work.

I did not stick long in the close company of the saints. For a few days I continued to attend the after-breakfast prayer meetings, where naturally I was expected to give outward demonstration of an inward state of grace. My effort in this direction was a pitiful fiasco, and I excused myself from attendance at the meetings presently on the ground that my mates in the scullery objected to it as an evasion of work. Thereupon, I imagine, the verdict was reached that I was backsliding. The sixpenny waitresses grew more and more reserved, and soon passed me with their former chill indifference, just as if I had never belonged to the glorious company of the elect. Worst of all, perhaps, the young sergeant reclaimed the "blood and fire" guernsey, which was quite a blow, as in the chill of the mornings it had proved a welcome addition to my thin cotton shirts.

The lieutenant didn't quite give me up. One afternoon when work was over, I was hurrying out of the front door to visit a ship just arrived, aboard which I thought I might get a place. The lieutenant was coming in from outside just as I reached the door from within. Blocking the way, he laid a hand on my shoulders and looked gravely into my eyes for several seconds.

"How is the soul?" he asked presently.

I had no time then, I felt, to discuss my spiritual condition. I was looking for a ship.

"Fine; fine as silk." And I wriggled past him out the door.

I have written lightly of my relations with the Salvation Army, but there was no time then — nor has there been since — when the organization failed to command my respect for its unworldly devotion and sincere spirit of fraternity. I have little faith in its faith; but much faith in its works.

When a person has gone deep into the mud, practically the only hope of reclamation lies in taking him entirely away from his former life and surroundings. The Salvation Army provides virtually the only organized method of accomplishing this, without which any effort on the individual's part, no matter how sincere, is likely to be sterile. By offering a person a living through its institutional work the Salvation Army can pluck him from his environment, and by putting him in a uniform, under its regulations and among its people, it can give him the best possible chance, often the only one, to make a radical change in his life.

As I have recorded, the Salvation Army of Newcastle called on me once for a testimony of faith and experience — and I failed it miserably. If at this date these words can be taken as a testimony, I write them gratefully.

XXVI

AWAY IN A WINDJAMMER

Whither, O splendid ship, thy white sails crowding,
Leaning across the bosom of the urgent West,
That fearest nor sea rising, nor sky clouding,
Whither away, fair rover, and what thy quest?
— ROBERT BRIDGES

AFTER some weeks with the Salvation Army in Newcastle a chance came to get away from drought-bitten Australia and back to Maori Land. A couple of men were wanted on the *Empreza*, a Colonial bark which, after discharging her cargo of timber, was to load coal for Auckland, New Zealand. I got one of the places.

There was some difficulty, as I had feared, in getting a permit to ship, owing to the fact that I was without a discharge, but after convincing the shipping commissioner that I had cleared out in New Zealand, not Australia, and had been ashore more than six months — the minimum time required to purge oneself of the crime of desertion — he withdrew his objections. I went to work a week before the time of sailing, as the skipper wanted me to help in getting out the cargo of lumber.

"I'll pay you four quid a month," he said. "We're under Colonial articles — only six months. They're nearly up now — will be by the time we're in New Zealand, so we'll pay off in Auckland."

"That suits me, sir," I responded. Indeed it suited me far better than anything I had hoped for. Not only should I have been glad of a chance to work my passage but before talking with the captain I had looked the *Empreza* over appraisingly, with the intention of stowing away in case I failed to make better arrangements.

Although the captain had been specific in regard to wages, he had not said whether it was a vacancy as an able-bodied or as an ordinary seaman that I was to fill, while the triple prospect of a passage to New Zealand, wages for the time I was with the ship, and a discharge in Auckland was so alluring that it didn't occur to me to ask. I had signed in the *Lethington* as an A.B., but a sailor's duties on a steamship are not as exacting as in a sailing vessel, besides which less had been expected of me as a passage man than if I had taken a regular place in the crew for wages.

The *Empreza's* crew was a small one in which every man counted—four A.B.'s, one O.S., and a boy. That made three persons to a watch, one of which was in charge of the mate and the other of the boatswain. There was nobody else aboard except the captain and the cook.

All this I learned shortly after going to work, together with the fact that the vacancy I was to fill was that of an A.B. If I was to ship at all, it would have to be in that capacity. So, although I had never worked aboard a square-rigged sailing vessel in my life, knew considerably less about the work than the O.S., who was getting only three pounds a month, and scarcely more than the boy, whose wages were thirty shillings, I signed the articles as an able-bodied seaman with the feeling that if I could keep up appearances until we sailed, it wouldn't matter what happened afterward.

To me the overtowering consideration was that the bark was bound for New Zealand and offered me a chance to get there. The rest was inconsequential. Had it been necessary, I should have undertaken cheerfully to ship as captain.

While we were lying at the dock passing planks out of the hold I was as able-bodied a seaman as any of them, but I realized that when the voyage actually began the situation would be different. Indeed it became different rather sooner. Having discharged the cargo of timber, we were dressing up the vessel in new traveling clothes and had adorned the outside of the skipper's cabin with a sparkling coat of white paint. We then turned our attention aloft, and the mate handed me a bucket filled with beautiful pumpkin yellow.

"Give a coat of that to the main yard. Mind that you don't get any spatters on the cabin."

It was a fresh, clear morning. Delighted at the prospect of spending it up in the breezes and the sunshine, I clambered aloft eagerly, swung myself out under the main yard in a boatswain's chair, and made fast the upper end of the short cord by which my bucket of paint was suspended. I then dipped my brush in the luscious ochre liquid and began to apply it carefully and lovingly to the yard

It is great fun to paint. Every human being who is a human being loves to do it. From the days of earliest childhood we find a rare, healthy joy in daubing spots of color about the world. And the poor gray old world is the better for it. Merely to spread the contents of a picayune twenty-five cent can of emerald green over a kitchen chair is a pleasure, but to have a big bucket of rich pumpkin yellow all to oneself, a smooth immensity of spar to splotch it on, a swaying seat aloft in the sun and air, a harbor about one filled with rippling indigo and swinging windjammers. . . .

Oh, boy! Oh, joy!

I painted. I painted blithely, zestfully, energetically. But not continuously. I paused from time to time to take a deep breath of the perfect air, to let my eyes wander back over the town or outward over the ship-spotted bay toward the ocean. Meanwhile my heavy bucket of paint, suspended by its cord, swung round and round, agitated by the motion of the ship. First it turned in one direction until the cord was tight; then it uncoiled and whirled gaily in reverse until the strands again were taut. I let it whirl; I was thinking of the greater sweeps of sun, air, space, sea, life, eternity . . .

"Red, roaring flames of ruddy hell! Now you *have* done it, haven't you? Well, I'll be sunk to Davy Jones tied to the bloody, bleeding fluke of the starboard anchor. The Devil blister you pink and red and sky blue!"

It was the voice of the mate rising from the deck — raucous and raging. He seemed to be annoyed. His tones grated unpleasantly on the tranquil perfection of the morning.

"Holy bald-headed Saint Patrick! You cross between a drunken hobo and a bucket of bilge water, *come down off that yard!*"

I looked toward my paint bucket. Only a frayed cord dangling from the yard was visible. I looked toward the deck. The glistening white of the cabin was streaked and blotched and slathered with pumpkin. Pools of pumpkin lay on the after deck; rivulets of pumpkin ran toward the break of the poop; spatters of pumpkin were visible as far forward as the cook's galley. . . .

I spent the rest of the morning and a long afternoon listening to objurgations from the mate, down on my knees on the resentfully hard deck wiping off the mess with a rag and a bottle of turpentine. The end of an imperfect day found me still at the task.

In the morning of the Fourth of July, with a sunny sky and a brisk wind from the west, we let go the Farewell

Buoy in the harbor of Newcastle and, towed out of the bay by a tug, sailed away from Australia. I never left any town with less regret than Newcastle, New South Wales. One's ideas of a place are based largely on how and why one is there. I was in Newcastle moneyless and because I couldn't get away. Doubtless the town has many attractions which I would remember had I been there in happier circumstances, but I recall it as an overgrown village with one dirty street and a harbor whence windjammers were sailing daily to America with coal, but with stranded sailors — never.

We left Newcastle with a stiff breeze aft which would have carried us across flying, if the captain had laid a proper course. Instead he headed much too far north. On the fourth night out I had the "gravy-eye trick" at the wheel. When I took the spokes at four o'clock in the morning it was still profoundly dark, with a murky veil overhead blotting out the stars. A sturdy wind from aft carried us boiling through the black mass of ocean ahead, leaving a bubbling white path straggling behind, almost the one visible object in the pervading darkness. The wind was steady and the *Empreza* steered well. A glance now and again at the yellow eye of the binnacle, where the compass card quivered and dipped, a turn of a spoke or two of the wheel was all there was for me to do. The demands upon me were not enough fairly to open my eyes, stinging and sticking as they were after the sudden waking from a sound sleep. The boatswain, who was in charge of the watch, seemed to be equally drowsy.

As the sky began to lighten slightly with the approaching dawn, we made out a vague shape in the shadows ahead of us.

"Must be a ship," said the boatswain.

"I don't make out any lights," I answered. "She must be traveling in the same direction as we are."

"Yes, most likely bound for New Zealand too. The old man seems to have laid his course right for once. We may as well follow her."

Nothing more was said for several minutes. We sailed on into the gloom toward the vaporous shadow ahead. The shades of night clung obdurately, sulkily, in the heavens and upon the waters. It was one of those heavy, gummy dawns when a feeble day wages a slow and barely victorious fight against the powers of darkness.

"She seems to be getting bigger," I remarked.

"Ye-es," said the boatswain, peering ahead intently. "That's odd too. This tub we're in doesn't outfoot many of 'em. That fellow ahead must have a foul bottom; must be covered with barnacles and weed."

"He's a brute of a big fellow," I said, amazed at the towering size of the shadow.

"Ye-es; he's a buster. . . . About a mile ahead, I'd say."

At that moment the dawn seemed to deal a quick, staggering blow to the darkness. The murky shadows gave way to an appreciable lightening.

"Good God!" cried the boatswain, gazing ahead. "That's no ship; it's an island!"

The boatswain jumped down the companionway into the cabin. A few seconds later the captain, a thin-faced, scrubby-bearded man of middle years, bounded to the deck with a look of scared surprise. He took one glance ahead.

"Hard down the wheel!" he bellowed at me, and to the boatswain, "Turn out all hands!"

The boatswain scurried forward, pulled open the forecastle door, poked his head inside, and roared in a voice to wake the dead, "*All hands on deck!*"

That is an SOS call to a sailor. In the code of the sea it is written that whatever else a man does or doesn't he must get up when he is called for his watch. The excuse "I overslept myself" or "I didn't hear" isn't listened to by a sailor's mates, which is much more serious than if it were merely the officers to whom it wasn't acceptable. But although a sailor always turns out when called, he has fifteen minutes ordinarily before he has to show himself on deck. Not so when he hears the SOS call "All hands." Then he leaps from his bunk in one second, into his sea boots in the next, and goes out the forecastle door in the third.

So our little crew was soon on deck. None too soon; for what five minutes earlier had appeared to the boatswain and me as a large sailing ship, lumbering on ahead, now towered in the gray morning mist as a mountain rising out of the sea in a rugged and threatening outline of pale vaporous blue.

We were driving right toward the jagged rocks of this island mountain, and were almost within the breakers when the dawn gave us warning. We had just time to alter our course and work out again to sea. Five minutes more of darkness would have piled us on the beach.

"That was Lord Howe Island," the boatswain told me later in the day. "It jumps up out of the sea all by itself about five hundred miles east of Australia. I'll know the brute next time from any ship that ever sailed; it scared the guts out of me. But we hadn't ought to have been there. The skipper was two hundred miles too far north."

Beginning with the day before we sailed, when I dropped the bucket of pumpkin paint from the main yard upon the snow-white cabin, the mate's attitude toward me was sarcastic and mistrustful. Obviously for a sailor to drop anything from aloft endangers those on deck and is considered one of the least excusable offenses he can commit. To spill or drop a bucket of paint is regarded as especially lubberly. In my case the mate was at least half to blame himself for giving me a bucket with too worn and flimsy a cord, but the time for me to object was before, not after, taking — and spilling.

The mate was a man well on in years, with an irascible temper and a firm belief that not to know what he knew wrote one down as an idiot. With the incident of the paint bucket ever before him, he had only scorn for my lack of familiarity with the work of a square-rigged sailing ship and made no bones of saying so. On one occasion, though, I rather got to windward of him. He had gone aloft to help the rest of us make up the mainsail during a blow one night, and had made fast the gaskets on the port side while I hung to the yard and the billowing canvas with both arms and the curve of my stomach. The next morning a couple of gaskets were loose and dangling, and the sail showed signs momentarily of tumbling down. Forgetting his part in the performance, the mate called me to him and pointed aloft.

"Do you see those gaskets?" he asked with unctuous scorn. "That's some of your work. A fine, bungling job, wasn't it?"

"It was a fine, bungling job, all right, but it wasn't my work."

"Whose was it then?"

"Yours," I replied. "You happened to do that job yourself."

"Huh!" he snorted, and turning his back upon me added testily, "Well, run up and fix it, anyway."

With the crew I got along better, because I was able to stand my wheel and lookout and could give as strong a pull on the braces as any. When aloft breaking out or taking in sail, I had to wait for the lead of others and was not as useful as I should have been. A green man aloft can be more of a danger than a help, and sometimes, I fear, I qualified in the first capacity.

"Yesus Chris'! Min' w'at you doin'," shouted the Swede who was the other A.B. in my watch one day, when we were aloft fisting in a topsail together. "You almos' peetch me over t'e yard into t'e sea."

I had withdrawn my weight suddenly from the swaying footrope on which we stood, and the release of tension had nearly broken his hold and shot him headfirst over the spar. A footrope is a treacherous aid—probably the most so of anything aloft. It drops from under your feet or catapults you upward, it snaps suddenly forward or back, according to the movements of the other men who are on it with you. In working aloft the old-time sailor observed the rule, "One hand for the ship and one for yourself." But in furling a square sail in a blow one needs both arms — half a dozen would be better — and the shellback of windjammer days lived long in proportion as he learned not to depend either on foothold or handhold but to curl his belly around the yard and hang to it snake fashion.

When I was talking with one of the *Empreza's* crew in Newcastle about the outfit I should need for the passage he laughingly responded, "You want a diving suit. This ship will go under as soon as she leaves the bay, and won't come up again till we reach Auckland."

The truth of this appeared after leaving Lord Howe Island, for by this time the fair wind that would have taken us nearly across if we had laid a correct course changed to contrary gales. Heavy weather set in and for a week our little craft was nearly submerged. She didn't ship so much water forward, but she rolled it in at the waist by the hogshead.

"Oil skeens an' rubber boots are no goot on t'is deck," said my Swedish watch mate. "You can't get from t'e fo'c's'le to t'e wheel wit'out gettin' wet to t'e waist, an' effery time you haff to geef a pull on t'e braces, you are near to drowndit."

The forecastle was only a tiny box perched on the forward deck. It was crowded and uncomfortable, but in heavy weather, when rivulets streamed down from leaky portholes, it could boast at least one convenience of the modern apartment. It had running water. The floor was awash with it, and we were lucky to keep even our bedding dry. We lived an amphibious existence, curling up in our bunks whenever we were not on deck, and eating such apologies for meals as the cook was able to produce in the circumstances.

When at length we sighted New Zealand we found the skipper had come as much too far to the south, after failing to hit Lord Howe Island, as he had gone too far to the north in leaving Newcastle. We were well down the west coast of the North Island. For several days we beat back against head winds, doubled Cape Maria Van Diemen, and finally came to dock in Auckland.

"Calls hiself a skipper," sniffed the boatswain in a voice confidential but not reverential. "If the old man is a skipper, then I'm a blooming bird of paradise. My eye, this skipper don't know enough about skipping to skip a rope."

It occurred to me that the old man was a good deal the sort of skipper that I was able-bodied seaman. There are plenty of other such navigators afloat — and, for that matter, able-bodied seamen.

The captain of the *Empreza* took practically no notice of me after I signed the ship's articles in Newcastle. I expected any day that he would call me aft and disrate me, but he appeared to maintain a silent neutrality in regard to the feud between me and the mate. In spite of the smallness of the *Empreza* and her crew, the captain gave no direct orders to the men during the passage, but when we took a tug into the harbor of Auckland he assumed command. It happened to be my trick at the helm, and after criticizing my steering once or twice he called the Swede and sent me away from the wheel, not I felt, because I was unskillful in following the tow rope but because he wanted to lay the basis for a low deal later.

What that was I learned when paid off. He had written me a bad discharge. This would be worse than none for the purpose of getting a vessel to London, and I protested to the shipping commissioner.

"I never refused duty or did anything to warrant a bad discharge," I argued. "If I didn't know my work, he should have disrated me during the passage and entered the fact in the log. I shouldn't have said anything against that." (I probably should have said something, but I should have recognized the justice of the action, notwithstanding.)

The shipping commissioner inclined toward my side, and we finally reached a compromise. Instead of a bad discharge as an A.B., the skipper gave me a good discharge as an ordinary seaman, though paying the full wages agreed upon in Newcastle.

I am glad to have been at sea in a square-rigged sailing ship. My passage in the *Empreza* is the only such experience I have ever had, for although I worked aboard the bark *Northernbay* for a while as a prelude to my voyage around the world, the adventure in her failed to take me farther asea than the edge of a South Street pier.

Even in the days of which I write, the deep-water windjammer was disappearing from the face of the waters. It is now practically vanished, an all but invisible speck on a horizon obscured by the drifting mist of the past. At this moment, when it is dropping below that shadowy horizon, hundreds of hands are stretched out to pull it back if only long enough to record its story for the benefit of succeeding generations. Now that the steamship, with its quick, short runs and its sputtering wireless, has ended the isolation and the timelessness of windjammer days, we are reaching back after the authentic texture of the era, especially its human side — its drudgery and romance, its sordidness and nobility, its intermittent comedy, its brooding tragedy, the yearnings of those old-time seamen, their superstitions, their limitations, their occasional sounding of depths as profound as those over which they sailed.

In the last few years scores of books have been written on the sailing-ship age, with a natural tendency to sentimentalize it. I am not among those who believe that the steamship is destroying the poetry and romance of the sea. Rather is it creating new kinds. But the heart and brain of the steamship is in the stokehole and on the bridge instead of on deck. Its officers are as able as any the sea has ever known, but its forecastle no longer contains that unmatched all-around mechanic, all-around man, that the windjammer bred.

Then, too, for communion with the ocean the windjammer was preëminent. In a steamship one has too great an advantage over the elements; in a sailing vessel it is a hand-to-hand fight against them. The difference is as great as between modern war with machine guns and explosive shells and the tournaments of the Middle Ages with lance and sword

Yet the glories of the age of sail should not blind us to its cost in misery for the ordinary sailor, who not only braved necessary dangers but suffered cruelly needless hardships. William McFee has called the sailor a "peasant afloat." But he is not a free peasant. Even to-day, except for the modifications worked by the La Follette act, the sailor is a bondsman in a civilization in which other labor — in theory, at least — has become free. He is the last serf surviving into the twentieth century

In his social as well as his economic position the deep-water sailor is subjected to inexcusable indignity. He is the victim of an ancient caste system, the organization of a ship's company hinging on an impassable line between "aft" and "forward" — between "officers" and "men." This system has many supporters not merely on the bridge, where one would expect it, but in the forecastle too, on the ground that discipline can be maintained in no other way.

I want to express unqualifiedly my own opinion that the system is iniquitous and unnecessary — a survival of medievalism galling to any one of democratic spirit or human charity. On shore large differences in the circumstances of men are sufficiently uncomfortable for persons of conscience to observe, but at sea — where for the time all are embarked in the same enterprise, are sharing like dangers, are coworkers in a tiny world of their own apart from other associations — such distinctions are intolerable.

The powers which a captain has of logging a man (fining him in pay for breaking the rules under which he signs) or disrating him (reducing his grade and pay for inability to perform his duties) are sufficient ordinarily to maintain discipline, while in case of serious offences a commander has recourse to putting a member of the crew in irons. Officers who find these means insufficient to maintain their prestige and authority ought to be driven off the sea or into it.

The square-rigged sailing ship was the creator of the sailor. It was also the creator of the modern world. Its tireless wings made possible those great reachings into the unknown during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries by which Western civilization was carried from a fringe of cities about the Mediterranean basin to the antipodes and the poles — by which the world was expanded from a plane to a sphere. In the spread of commerce, too, the linking of the nations into one industrial fabric — that vastly humanizing movement which followed the age of discovery and conquest — the sailing ship was fundamental. It enabled man to find his world, subdue it, and internationalize it.

Nor was the human significance of the sailing ship of lesser account. As Lincoln Colcord has said:

"The sailing ship stood for a sociological achievement of the highest order. She stood for a medium whereby men were brought to their fullest development."

Vale, then, O Windjammer! You were the fairy godmother who quickened into life the world we know. We of the twentieth century stand at salute as you dip below the last horizon.

They are grander things than all the art of towns,
Their tests are tempests and the sea that drowns,
They are my country's line, her great art done
By strong brains laboring on the thought unwon,
They mark our passage as a race of men,
Earth will not see such ships as those again.

XXVII

HOMEWARD IN THE STOKEHOLE

Oh, have you heard the news, my Johnny?
One more day!
We're homeward bound to-morrow,
One more day!
Only one more day, my Johnny,
One more day!
Oh, rock and row me over,
One more day!
— SAILORS' CHANTY

WE sailed at dusk. Wellington receded in the west, a cluster of lights grinning out of a mauve cloudbank. Presently the grins contracted into smirks and then faded into the expressionless mask of the mauve cloudbank.

It was my last glimpse of the antipodes. I was signed as a trimmer (a coal passer, they call him, in American ships) to work for the next six weeks in the inwards of the steamship *Rimutaka*, bound to London around the Horn.

I joined a group of my mates of the black gang, who were leaning against the bulwarks near the bow. Although midwinter in the southern hemisphere, there was a touch of spring in the air. Still more was there spring in the hearts of the crew of the *Rimutaka*, for they were homeward bound. Always sentimental creatures, sailors become doubly so at that thought. For many of them it is nothing more than a thought. They have no home when they get "home." For them home is a fortnight in a drab sailors' boarding house, with a couple of drunks, a couple of brothels, a couple of cheap shows. For that reason, perhaps, the ideal is all the more precious.

Homeward, ho-o-omeward,
Homeward once more;
The good ship *Rimutaka's*
Headed for E-e-ngland's shore.
Far o'er the ocean
No more we'll roam;
For we-e-e are speeding
Sp-e-eding home.

Crisp, who was to be one of my two trimmer watch mates in the stokehole, was singing softly as he rested his forearms on the top of the bulwarks and looked out to sea. He was a slender, fairly tall youngster with a small, thin, yellow face, of which the most noticeable feature was hard black eyes, one with a slight blemish. Through the open door of the firemen's forecastle I could hear another voice half singing, half humming

Green fields of Ireland,
Where the shamrock grows . . .

There was music as well as spring in the air.

The *Rimutaka* was a "frozen-mutton boat", one of a fleet which came out from England around the Cape of Good Hope with a general cargo and went back around the Horn heavy with the quarters of sheep wrapped in muslin and congealed to the hardness of logs of wood cut for the fireplace. Refrigeration has been the making of modern New Zealand, the equipment of ships with cold-storage holds having made it possible to put its mutton on the British table beside that of Scotland and to sell Colonial butter in competition with that of Denmark.

After quitting the *Empreza* in Auckland I had come direct by boat and rail to Wellington, the port of departure for most of the steamships leaving New Zealand for England.

I had found the *Rimutaka* about to sail, with no vacancies in the seamen's forecastle but in need of a couple of trimmers. Having begun my Odyssey in the steward's department (as cabin boy of the *Northernhay*) and later made three passages as a seaman (in the *Lethington*, *Moeraki*, and *Empreza*), it seemed that I might as well round out my experience in the only kind of work aboard ship still untried — as one of the black gang.

"What's our job like, anyway?" I asked of Crisp, when he paused in his singing.

"There won't be much t' worry us fer the first few days, with the bunkers all full up. Abaht all we'll 'ave t' do is t' stand in the stoke'ole, give the bunker openin's a jab once in a w'ile with a shovel, an' let 'em run. Later on, w'en we has t' work the bunkers with a w'eelbarrer, it'll be 'arder.

"The worst o' the job ain't gettin' aht the bleedin' coals; it's cleanin' the bloody fires. Leastwise, that's the 'ottest part; 'ot enough t' fry the gizzard out o' yuh w'en we gets in the tropics."

"What have we to do with cleaning the fires? That's the firemen's job, isn't it?" I ventured.

"No fear. If there's any 'ot er dirty work anyw'eres, that's the trimmer's. Yuh 'as to stop in the stoke'ole at the beginnin' o' every watch an' 'elp in cleanin' the fires. Then yuh 'as t' turn to an' coal the bars."

"What's that?"

"W'at's w'at? W'y coal the bars is coal the bars, ain't it? W'at else 'ud it be? W'en the fires is cleaned aht, they 'as t' be fulled up again with coals, don't they? Well . . . Hello! There's eight bells. It's our watch. Yuh'll know a lot more abaht this job by the time we gets t' Prince Albert dock than yuh does now."

The stokehole force of the *Rimutaka* was divided into three watches, four firemen and three trimmers in each. A watch did four hours of work, followed by eight hours off. Thus unlike the sailors, who worked twelve hours a day, the black gang did eight hours' duty in the course of every twenty-four. I was in the eight to twelve watch, night and morning.

"Where's Dutton?" asked Crisp, as we started for the stokehole. "Oh, 'ere 'e is now," he added, as a figure came out of the forecastle almost the antithesis of his own. Dutton was short, stocky, pudgy, with a dull face and an uninspiring manner. He looked like the kind that would need more help from others than he would return — an impression which later events amply confirmed.

The stokehole of a steamship is a pit amidships, as far down as you can get. A blast of hot, fetid air came up through the gratings as we reached the entrance way and one at a time went down the series of vertical iron ladders for a distance of about fifty feet

"Mind yer grip," said Crisp. "These 'ere rungs gets greasy. They was a bloke missed 'is 'old 'ere lawst w'yage. Well, it couldn't 'ave 'urted 'im much. 'E was soft as a sweat rag w'en they picked 'im up off the iron plates below."

We reached the bottom. I was in an iron cell bounded by red-hot coal and scalding water. Fires in front of me, fires behind me, roared and crackled. Boilers above them hissed and boomed. There were two boilers forward and two aft, each with four fires beneath it, sixteen in all, goaded by forced draught. Between these towering walls of heat there was hardly more than twelve feet of cell in which to sweat and work. Crosswise the cell extended about forty feet, the iron wall of a bunker rising sheer on either side, with a small slit at the base for letting out the mines of coal stored above and beyond. Behind the stokehole was the engine room, separated by an iron bulkhead with a small door

One had to raise his voice to be heard a few feet away; one was infiltrated from head to foot with the noise, the heat, the power, the drama of this dungeon in the bowels of the ship, ironbound, firebound, steambound — hard, glittering, formidable as the gates of hell.

The firemen had preceded us trimmers down the ladders and already had the doors of the furnaces open for the cleaning of the fires. They ran their slicers (thick, ten-foot iron pokers) into the hissing, red mouths, thrusting, turning, jabbing with demonical fury into the throats of the fire-breathing dragons before them. As ashes and incandescent clinkers rained into the pits, Crisp and Dutton, reaching in with long-handled rakes, drew the waste out upon the floor of the stokehole.

"Yuh stand by with a bucket o' water t' wet the ashes down," said Crisp to me.

The opening of the furnace doors had already raised the temperature of the stokehole greatly, and as I doused with water the glowing piles of ashes and embers on the iron floor, the stokehole changed from a Dutch oven into a steam cooker. Gases from the still burning coal mingled with the white cloud of moisture from the water, making a fog hard to breathe in or even see through.

"Let's get them ashes aht o' the way," said Crisp, when the piles were cool enough to handle. Having coaled the bars meanwhile, we now began shovelling the debris on the floor into cans

" 'Eave away!" Crisp shouted, as the first can was filled. Up it went by pulley to a 'tween deck above, where the trimmers of the watch preceding were gathered to dump it out through a chute over the ship's side.

"Under below!" we heard presently from above, as the empty can came rattling down to us.

When the last of the ashes was disposed of, Crisp turned to me.

"Well, that job's done. Usually we goes from 'ere into the bunkers an' begins t' get out coals, but as long as they still runs aht themselves we don't 'ave t' do nothin' but spread 'em around the stokehole in piles 'andy t' the fires."

When the watch ended at midnight and we climbed out of the stokehole to the deck, we found the weather had changed. The feel of spring was gone. A cold wind was piping up out of the Antarctic, and from then on to old Cape Stiff our days were mostly gray and gloomy, with boisterous seas and wintry gales. One looked forward with a good deal of pleasure sometimes to the heat — excessive though it was — of the stokehole.

"Now for a wash," I said with enthusiasm, as Crisp, Dutton, and I went forward to the forecastle.

"Not yet," said Dutton. "No fear. We 'as t' lay around until they gets the fires cleaned an' then 'elp in gettin' up the ashes. We 'as t' empty the cans like the four-to-eight watch did fer us."

Thus it turned out that a watch, supposedly of four hours, stretched practically to five. And when the wash came, it was far from a treat. The *Rimutaka* was a fairly new, well-built steamship, carrying both passengers and cargo, and one might have expected her to be equipped with facilities whereby her firemen could keep reasonably clean. But the conveniences — one would better say inconveniences — were an evidence of how often our much-praised modern industrialism fails to provide for the comfort or decency of its workers, or does it with such a lack of intelligence and pains as to produce more annoyance than satisfaction. We were able to get hot water from the stokehole for the trouble of bringing it up, and when our work was over at the end of a watch, one of us three trimmers would fill a bucket apiece while another would draw them up to the deck with a rope.

But the wash room was simply an exposed iron box on the forward part of the main deck, while the forecastle was one flight down. There was not a hook or shelf in the wash room where one could put clothing. One had to undress in the forecastle, run up the ladder to the deck, dash through Antarctic breezes or Cape Horn snows to the wash room, scrub off what grime one could remove quickly in a cold, draughty room, then bolt back to the forecastle. It was enough to give even an Eskimo the croup.

Even with the best of facilities stokers seldom get quite clean. A high degree of cleanliness seems futile to one who knows that within a few hours he must return to the grime. On shipboard a member of the black gang is usually to be identified, even when off duty, by an ebony border around the eyes. Not until his "going-ashore wash" does he try seriously to remove this — if then.

"It must be abaht time t' crawl inside," said Crisp one night after persistent prodding with a shovel at the bunker openings, first on one side of the stokehole and then on the other, failed to give us a run of coal. Crisp got a slush lamp, thrust it through the bunker opening, then got down on his hands and knees and craned his head through the hole. Next he crawled inside and presently called back to me, "It's all right, Yank; come along."

I followed Crisp into the bunkers, and we began shovelling coal out through the opening while Dutton worked "on the plates", as we called it, distributing fuel around the stokehole. Later Crisp went over into the starboard bunkers, and he and Dutton alternated there and "on the plates." The latter job was the lightest, but as it was also the hottest I had no special ambition to share in it. The port bunkers became my working home for the voyage.

A ship's bunkers are caverns along the sides filled with fuel. A series of decks separates the total up-and-down space into horizontal tunnels, with chutes amidships leading toward the stokehole. For a few days one simply has to shovel into the chutes. As the coal recedes one has to follow up the vein with a wheelbarrow.

One's only light is the flicker of slush lamps. A good deal of the coal is in chunks so large that they have to be broken with a sledge hammer before it is possible to handle them with shovel or wheelbarrow. One is constantly stirring up soft-coal dust and filling the air of the low-ceilinged tunnels with it. It works through one's clothes, into his skin; it drifts into his eyes, nose, mouth, ears, hair. One lives in soft-coal dust during his working hours — breathes it, eats it, dreams of it in his sleep.

The second engineer, the boss of the stokehole, walked in on us one night during the cleaning of the fires.

"I want to get those pass pockets cleaned out. There's room for only one wheelbarrow. One of you can roll it while another shovels out the coals from the pocket and the third spreads them around the stokehole. Crisp, you know how to go at it."

"I knows a bloomin' sight too well 'ow t' go at it," agreed Crisp *sotto voce*. "Most o' our coals is in the bunkers along the Rimu-blinkin'-taka's sides," he explained for my benefit, "but there's a good bit amidships for'ard o' the stoke'ole. It's got t' be shovelled aht o' a couple o' small openin's at the 'ead o' that narrer pass between the port an' starboard boilers, an' rolled aht in a w'eelbarrer. You're biggest an' strongest, Yank; you'd better roll the w'eelbarrer."

Dutton making no objection, I was elected unanimously to do the heaviest part of the work. I was feeling fit and liked the prospect, but I was surprised at the allusion to my size and strength, as I was only five feet, eight inches in height and not unusually husky. I came to realize shortly, though, that aboard the *Rimutaka* I was relatively something of a physical prodigy. Seventeen of the twenty-one men in the firemen's forecastle were Cockneys, typical of London workingmen in that they were tough-fibered and enduring but short in stature and unimpressive in physique. Crisp was the tallest of the Cockneys, but he did not measure up to me, and I soon grew used to such requests as, "You do this, Yank; you're tallest;" or, "Help us out 'ere, big fellow; we needs some beef."

There was a good deal of difficulty in getting the coal out of the pass pockets, as the openings were small, and big chunks — cobs, we called them — frequently blocked the flow until we could break them with a hammer or pry them out of the way. I found that I had to travel fast to keep the sixteen hungry mouths supplied with coal. In order to get with the wheelbarrow from the center alleyway of the stokehole to the wings, we laid "bridges" — iron planks a foot and a half wide — across the "dry docks", as we called the levels about a foot below the rest of the stokehole upon which the lower fires opened. To steer a wheelbarrow loaded with coal over these narrow causeways when the ship was rolling required skill and brawn.

"Back hand," I would shout as a warning to the firemen not to ram me from behind with their slicers as I came out of the pass and shot across toward one of the wings on the run. Even then the side of the ship for which I was bound would sometimes rise up on a wave and push me backward, barrow and all, while again, after I had acquired momentum in expectancy of an upgrade, the path would sink suddenly ahead of me, sending the wheelbarrow spinning against the bulkhead.

For a while I turned the wheelbarrow over to Dutton, who was wearing a pair of boots with nails on the bottoms. Of course he slid on the iron floor at the slightest provocation. Presently, when running out from the pass with a heavy load the wheelbarrow got away from him. The third engineer, the officer in charge of our watch, was in the stokehole at the moment, his face turned away from the onrushing juggernaut.

"Back 'and!" roared Dutton in warning, as he tried vainly to check the energy of his vehicle. Either the third failed to hear, or thought he was immune to the impetus of a runaway wheelbarrow. Without deigning even to turn about, the third calmly stood his ground — for a second.

"Back 'and!" Dutton shouted once more, frantically. The next instant the third engineer went sprawling into a "dry dock" on his back, with the wheelbarrow and its load of coal capsized on top of him.

Getting to his feet, hurt more in dignity than in body, the third shouted menacingly at the offending trimmer, "Back haand, iss it? I'll back haand yewr backside! Don't ever set fute in this stokehole again wi' those boots. Tak' them off, an' if you haven't any ithers, go in yewr stocking feet."

XXVIII

BURIED IN THE BUNKERS

If we do not find pleasant things we shall at least find new things.
— "CANDIDE"

A GRIMY, gritty life is the trimmer's, but although dreary and same enough for the most part, it is not without occasional excitement and risk. There are plenty of chances of injury through the fall of a heavy chunk and not infrequent opportunities for premature burial by getting carried down a bunker chute in an unexpected slide of coal. The bunkers of our ship were regarded as especially dangerous by the members of the black gang. Although the vessel had been in commission only a few years, there had been several serious accidents, one of them fatal.

"These ain't bunkers," said Crisp to me one day. "They is trimmers' graves."

They pretty nearly proved so to him and me one night shortly after. A jam had occurred in the opening through which I was working coal down toward the stokehole. Unable to relieve the blockade by myself, I called upon Crisp for assistance. We spent half the watch trying to loosen the jam from above, but without success.

"I'm afraid we'll 'ave t' try it from below," announced Crisp dubiously. "I'm not keen abaht gettin' under that 'ole, but we cawn't do nothin' from up 'ere."

We went back to the stokehole and crawled into the lower bunker from the opening through the bulkhead. After reconnoitering for a few moments we crawled out again and went for the officer of the watch, the third engineer, who was on duty in the engine room just behind the stokehole. He followed us into the bunker and looked at the opening to the deck above, which the flicker of our slush lamps showed to be completely blocked by a huge chunk of coal, the lower part of which protruded a foot or so.

"What kind o' coals is the chief buying, anyhoo?" commented the third irritably. "That's no what I call a cob; that's half a mountain."

To attack the jam from below was a ticklish maneuver, because when the coal was loosened it would come with a rush, perhaps many tons in a few seconds, including chunks weighing a hundred and more pounds.

"Caan't ye pry the brute loose wi' a slicer from above?" asked the third presently.

"We cawn't get at it, sir," replied Crisp. "There's too many coals on top o' it."

"That's no sae gude either. . . . Weel, I dinna see anything but t' climb oot on yon girder wi' a hammer an' slicer an' ha' at the cob that way. . . . Ye'll ha' t' mind yewrsel's. When the cob begins t' crack, jump back as fast as ever ye caan. We ha' pulled one dead trimmer oot o' these bunkers already. There's no call t' make it twa. . . . An' remember the run o' coals wull stop oop the opening t' the stokehole. Ye canna get oot till we dig ye clear. Ye may be in thir for most o' the next watch, but bang on the stokehole bulkhead wi' yewr hammer t' let us know ye are all richt, an' then just tak' it easy until we caan clear the opening.'

After which the third engineer withdrew from the bunkers and left the job to us. Taking a long, heavy slicer, a massive sledge hammer, and a slush lamp, we clambered out on a girder until we were almost under the huge chunk of coal which was causing the trouble.

"You 'it the slicer, Yank, w'ile I 'old it," said Crisp, wedging the heavy bar into a crevice in the overhanging chunk of coal.

Bang! . . . Bang! I gave the slicer two slow, resounding blows.

"'It 'im again! 'E's Irish, 'e ain't got no friends."

Bang! . . . Bang! . . . Bang! . . . Bang! The iron-shelled bunkers reverberated with the clamor and I nearly fell off the girder in the ferocity of my attack.

"'Old easy. Not too 'ard now. I think I sees a crack."

A few more blows. Then a purring sound from the overhanging block.

"Get back quick!" shouted Crisp, and together we scrambled across the girder and then over the coal heaped up farther back in the bunker.

The jam hung just a second. Then there was a crash, a roar, and a rattle. Down poured the coal in a black Niagara. It came and it kept coming. It blocked the opening to the stokehole at once, cutting off our exit. This we had expected. What we had not counted upon was the turgid cloud of dust which rose as the coal fell.

"There goes the glim," I said. The pall was so dense that as it enveloped the slush lamp, which in our hurry we had left behind, hooked in a beam, the flame sputtered, turned red, and then went out.

Still the coal ran and still the dust rose. At first we were well out of it in our corner, but gradually it drifted upon us. We found our nostrils smarting; we began to cough. Presently the flow of coal diminished to an intermittent rattle and finally ceased. But the dust continued to advance upon us, ever thicker and more stifling.

"Stuff yer sweat rag over yer nose an' lie on yer face," suggested Crisp. "Bli' me if we didn't ferget t' pound on the stoke'ole bulk'ead," he added, "t' let 'em know . . . [he was interrupted by a spell of coughing] that we was all right."

"We can't do it . . . kerchoo! . . . now," I answered with a sneeze. "The coal dust is so thick out there it would suffocate us. We'd better see if we can't crawl farther back in the bunker, as it is."

Fortunately we had another lamp near by which had not gone out. We took this and started to wriggle back between the top of the coal in our bunker and the ceiling above us. In filling bunkers the space is never entirely occupied. There is always a little room at the top. We pulled and thrust our prone bodies forward in an effort to advance into the bunker and away from the pursuing dust cloud.

In order to keep the dust out of our lungs and save our strength, neither of us spoke for some minutes. We clawed at the coal in front of us, pushed it aside, and lunged forward.

Finally we paused, panting for breath. The air was a little clearer, such as there was of it in the narrow recess between the coal below us and the ceiling above.

Crisp spoke. "If we can get around this corner 'ere, there is a cross pocket, an' I thinks as 'ow we can work through t' the bunkers on the starboard side — an' aht."

The thought was encouraging. We doubled the corner and stopped to breathe again. Going forward on our bellies was hard work, especially with a jagged bed of coal beneath and a ceiling above from which protruded the sharp edges of girders and a beadwork of rivet heads.

Wriggling, squirming, clawing — stopping frequently to get our breath — we thrust forward. We tore our clothes, scratched our hands, and bruised our heads. But inch by inch we wormed our way across the ship, coming out finally in the starboard bunkers, which Crisp knew, from his daily work in them, afforded an easy exit. We reappeared in the stokehole none the worse except for an external and internal bath of coal dust which we were trying to sneeze and cough out of our lungs and stomachs.

But more time than we guessed had passed since the rush and roar of coal had told the force in the stokehole that we had broken the blockade. Our watch was long over and we were well into the next. Not having heard the raps on the bulkhead, which had been agreed upon as a signal that we were safe, the stokehole force had become alarmed at the thought that we had been caught in the slide of coal and buried. The chief engineer, summoned below, had put a special gang at work to dig us out.

Badly as we had been scared, the others had been frightened worse. We were received by our mates first as ghosts, then as heroes. The third engineer wasted no words either in praise or sympathy, but as we left the stokehole he nodded to us.

"I'll ha' a couple o' bottles sent for'ard for each o' ye to-morrow," he said.

And, mind you, he was Scotch!

XXIX

HELL'S BELLS

But the Chief comes forrard 'n' he says,
says he, "I give you a straight tip:
Come none o' your Cape Horn fever lays
aboard o' this yer ship.
On wi' your rags o' duds, my son, 'n' aft,
'n' down the hole:
The best cure known for fever-chills is
shovelling bloody coal."

—JOHN MASEFIELD

THREE weeks after leaving New Zealand we were at the Horn. Just before reaching that desolate promontory we had cold weather, leaving snow and ice on the decks overnight and ending in a gale which stirred a turbulent sea about us. But the wind died and the sky cleared at the Cape, so that the day we passed around the farthermost reach of the South American continent, like the one when the *Lethington* weathered the Cape of Good Hope, was warm and tranquil. A sparkling sun radiated upon a sea as azure as the Tyrrhenian, as placid as the Serpentine, although in the distance we could see snow lying heavy upon the crags of Tierra del Fuego.

A few days later we put into Montevideo for bunkers. In the absence of docks in the harbor of this picturesque, rambling old city of Spanish aspect, we took our coal from lighters, and again steamed northward. Passing the Brazilian convict settlement on the beautiful mid-ocean mountain of Fernando Noranha, we were soon in the tropics.

It is the tropics that put one to the test as a fireman. I had stood the trip from Wellington to Montevideo fairly well, for scorching as the temperature was at the cleaning of the fires, that chore occupied only the first part of each watch, after which the stokehole was not intolerable and the bunkers were comparatively cool. But as we nosed northward of the Tropic of Capricorn we entered a stoker's inferno.

"If any blinkin' passenger wants t' know 'ow 'ot a stoke'ole is," remarked Crisp, "'e oughter visit it durin' the cleanin' o' the fires. If 'e wants t' know 'ow 'ot 'ell is, 'e oughter visit a stoke'ole durin' the cleanin' o' the fires in the tropics."

The suggestion was excellent, although as little likely to be acted upon as most advice, for in the tropics passengers never show any enthusiasm for a warmer place than the breezy side of a well-shaded deck, while visitors are not invited to the stokehole during the cleaning of the fires in any circumstances.

It is curious how variously one may be affected by the tropics — as, I suppose, by most conditions. My first contact with this zone — on the deck of the *Lethington* — I recall as one of my most idyllic experiences at sea. My second passage — in the stokehole of the *Rimutaka* — was a nightmare which is cruelly vivid to this day. It is the one undertaking of my round-the-world voyage which I would not want to repeat and would have given a good deal to withdraw from at the time if it had been possible — which it expressly wasn't.

As we pressed northward and eastward through the equatorial belt, it became impossible to work in the bunkers without climbing to the deck at intervals for a breath of fresh air and something cool to drink. With the heat of the sun filtering down into the bunkers from the decks, and that of the furnaces rising into them from below, these dark caves became steaming ovens. The stokehole emitted a dragon's breath that burned and wilted one at the same time. There was no relief in filling the lungs with such air; rather a feeling of congestion, of slow suffocation — the gasping of a fish when deprived of water. The heat leapt at one, bearing him down, breaking his strength, crumbling his resistance. The firemen didn't pretend to stay in the stokehole. They alternated two and two in watching the fires, then in retreating to the deck.

"I never worked in a 'otter ship than the Rimu-blinkin'-taka," was the comment of Crisp, who had had an extensive experience. "The ventilation in it was never intended t' make its stoke'ole popular fer cruisin' in the tropics."

The vessel was certainly not designed for hot-weather comfort below. There were two ventilating shafts for the purpose of bringing air from above into the stokehole, but they were not provided with fans or any artificial means of suction. When there was a good breeze forward or on the beam we got — some of it. When the wind died down, or blew from aft, we went without.

The tropics are calculated to exhaust a man in the stokehole in any circumstances, but were especially hard on men coming into them, as we did, after having stood before the fires already seven days a week for a month. One fireman and three trimmers were laid up successively, the fireman and one trimmer on account of heat, the other trimmers on account of accidents. As soon as one man would get well, another would come down. We were short two trimmers for a couple of days together and one for the entire passage of the tropics.

On top of this the coal ran low. It had practically given out also just before we reached Montevideo. One can excuse a happening like this once in a voyage, but twice in succession is not easy to pardon, especially if one is working the bunkers in the tropics and has to go grubbing coal out of the farthest recesses of stifling caverns, seeking for it almost by the handful. I cursed the chief engineer to every square foot of the bunkers I traveled; I would have cursed him to every square centimeter of his own face if I had run across him, but he never showed himself in the stokehole and, at this stage of the voyage, not much in the engine room. I imagine he spent most of his time trying to keep cool in his cabin or on deck.

Short of men and lacking in coal, we couldn't get fuel out of the bunkers fast enough for the appetites of the fires, which were as voracious in hot weather as in cool.

"You trimmers will have to go on six-hour watches," said the second engineer one noon, when we went aft for our daily glass of rum. "They've been short of coals on the plates several times lately. There's one of you laid up sick. The other eight of you will go into two watches of four men each and do a trick of six hours instead of four."

"'Ow abaht our meals, sir?" asked one of the group.

"You'll have to arrange about that somehow. The cook will save something for you. This ship has got to get to London."

The new edict meant working six hours at a stretch, twelve instead of eight out of the twenty-four, through the wilting humidity of the torrid zone.

"Bli' me if I likes the looks o' it a bit," said Dutton lugubriously. "I down't see 'ow we's goin' t' get nothin' t' eat, does you, Crisp?"

"A bit less t' eat may make yuh sprier," retorted Crisp tartly, for both he and I had often had to help Dutton in the bunkers when he got behind with the coal supply and the firemen began to beat a tattoo on the bulkhead with their shovels as a sign that the plates were bare.

Personally I was more concerned about sleep than food, but the chance was poor for either. In the four-to-ten watch, in which I was placed in the new arrangement, we turned out in the early morning and went to work without a bite to eat or a drop to drink. About six o'clock a kettle of coffee came down, but with nothing to eat, and it usually happened if one was working in the bunkers that by the time he had a chance to stop and reconnoiter there was nothing left. My mates on the *Rimutaka* were seldom solicitous for the welfare of any one other than themselves. We were supposed to run up and get a bite at the seven-bell breakfast, about 7.30 o'clock, but were commonly too busy to do so because of the necessity of getting an extra supply of coal ready for the cleaning of the fires by the incoming watch of firemen at eight o'clock. Practically we started on an empty stomach at four o'clock in the morning and worked through until ten without anything to eat, after which we had a warmed-over breakfast of whatever was left.

In regard to sleep, we fared even worse. For many of us the forecastle was too hot for rest, yet the awning on the forward deck was not put up until we were nearly at the equator, and it was always rolled up at sundown. As a consequence, we slept almost anywhere on deck at night, likely to be waked suddenly by a downpour of rain which was almost certain to fall toward morning in the tropical belt.

In the midst of the heat the pores in my back failed any longer to work. I didn't seem to sweat there at all. I use the word without apology, although my schoolteachers used to insist that horses sweat, men perspire. Possibly in other circumstances men do perspire, but in the stokehole they sweat. In the stokehole in the tropics they more than sweat — they pour. If they don't, they are in a bad way. I didn't sweat — at least in the back. Maybe I perspired there with a moderate and genteel reticence — I'm told I must have — but it gave me no relief.

The heat seemed to get into my back and stay there. I longed to drill a hole somewhere and let it out. My shoulders rested on me like a red-hot iron yoke stretching from arm to arm. The trouble weakened me in the very place where I most needed strength for swinging a shovel or pushing a wheelbarrow.

One morning in a stokehole sizzling and boiling as we watered the ashes after cleaning the fires, I pulled off my loose woolen shirt. This, as a protection against flying sparks, a pair of dungaree trousers, stout shoes, and a sweat rag around the neck, or dangling from the waist, was the usual stokehole costume.

"Throw one of those buckets of water on my back," I said to Dutton.

"It'll souse yer pants an' shoes," he objected.

"Never mind them. . . . Good!" I answered as the cooling stream dripped from me. "Throw on another bucket."

"You hadn't oughter do that," cautioned one of the firemen. "It's liable t' make you worse."

"I'd rather be worse than no better."

Thereafter I had buckets of cold water thrown over me from time to time in the stokehole, usually by unwilling hands, as an impression prevailed that the treatment was bad for me. The doctor, too, advised against it. I surmise that he didn't know. Ships' doctors seldom do. If they did, they wouldn't be ships' doctors.

If it hadn't been that we were short one trimmer already, I probably should have laid up for a day or two and tried to get in better condition. As it was, I continued to turn out for every watch, although for several days I was unable to do my full share of work.

Never has air — even the sultry, desultory breezes that lag wearily over equatorial waters — seemed so grateful to my skin, so refreshing to my lungs, as that of the deck of the *Rimutaka* after I had climbed the fifty feet of iron ladders from the stokehole at the end of a watch, or at intervals in the midst of one, to drop down for a few minutes of rest and a swallow of the oatmeal water which we kept at hand. Sometimes, as I began that fifty-foot vertical climb my head would be dizzy and my arms limp. Would I have the strength to reach the top? . . .

I remembered what Crisp had said of the man who lost his hold, "Well, it couldn't 'ave 'urted 'im much. 'E was soft as a sweat rag w'en they picked 'im up off the iron plates below."

Curious and unpleasant dreams haunted me during such sleep as I could get at this time. They were, I suppose, a kind of delirium due to the stimulants I was taking. My diet was almost exclusively liquid, consisting of six different drinks: coffee, tea, oatmeal water, lime juice, the daily glass of rum allowed us through the tropics, and a quinine tonic given me by the doctor. The quinine tonic was probably chiefly responsible for the disturbing fantasies which pursued me when asleep. It was even more impossible to get away from the stokehole when asleep than when awake. In my dreams a thin, gritty stream of coal dust used to sift out of the bottom of the bunk above me and trickle on my head. It ran on and on endlessly, getting into my mouth, working down my back, spreading itself in a scratchy, sooty layer which I had to wallow in whenever I turned my head. At other times a man stood at the foot of my bunk and shovelled coal on me. He worked regularly, rhythmically, tirelessly — much more so than I ever did — but he seemed to have time to pick out that part of the pile which had the most dust in it.

I grew to hate the passengers. I hated the women who walked the decks so unconcernedly in their cool, clean, pretty dresses, stepping several feet to one side and averting their eyes whenever they encountered a dirty trimmer. I felt that we were entitled to their admiring gaze as heroes, or at least deserved a look of gratitude for our labors. But the women didn't seem to be aware of what we were doing for them, or even of our existence, except as filthy parts of the ship to be ignored and avoided. Their smiles and attentions were all for the nattily dressed young deck officers. In revenge, when passing one of these cool, clean, prettily dressed, wholly indifferent women, I often lurched so as at least to gain the notice that came with the fear that I was about to bump into her daintiness with my sweat-soaked, coal-begrimed clothing.

In going by the dining saloon at meal times, I used to look through the portholes into the cool, airy interior. About the tables, spread with snowy cloths, shining silver, sparkling glassware, and appetizing food, the passengers sat comfortable, immaculate, complacent. I wanted to stride inside, upset a table, and bellow, "Hell's bells! Do you realize that if it weren't for us coal-eating, fire-swallowing stokers, you would be floating about in mid-Atlantic for the rest of your lives?"

One morning, when the forecastle was too humid for sleep, I was stretched out in a shady corner of the main deck aft, trying to get a nap. The boatswain waked me.

"The passengers might not like to see you here," he said as I looked up in sleepy surprise. "Why don't you go to the fo'c's'le?"

"The passengers be eternally and infernally damned," I replied. "The passengers be sunk to the bottom of the Atlantic and you with them."

I lay down to go to sleep again.

"If you stay here, I'll have to tell the mate," the boatswain insisted.

"Do," I replied rising halfway to my feet in anger. "Tell him that if anybody wakes me again this morning I'll mash him to mush against that hatch coaming and throw him overboard."

I don't know whether the mate ever got my message, but I was not again disturbed, and later in the day an awning was put up forward which ought to have been provided a week earlier.

If I were put on a jury to try a case of murder in the stokehole, I should be extremely lenient with the man who had committed the crime. There is something incredibly irritating about the unnatural heat which wears the temper to a wire edge and at times deprives one of reason.

"Talk abaht swearin'," said one of the firemen. "I'll bet the best parson on earth couldn't work in the stoke'ole 'alf a dozen watches without 'e was cussin' like the rest o' us."

How the sea changes! Or rather how changeless is the sea and how changing is man's attack upon it! Most of the world's land has been conquered, tamed, and exploited. The sea is still as unsubdued and unsubmissive as in the days of the Vikings or Henry the Navigator. Man has done no more than skim precariously its surface; he has not tamed it one whit. The only progress he can boast is an ability to skim its surface somewhat faster and less precariously than once.

Yet man, always battling, is also ever changing his attack — planning, perspiring, dying in the hope of eventual mastery! In the short span of years since I was in the forecastle not only has the deep-water windjammer practically disappeared and its successor, the tramp steamship, begun to wane, but the old-time stokehole has had sentence pronounced upon it. Fortunately there need be no regret at the passing of the latter. Long ago steamship companies whose routes lay mostly in the tropics — like those from Europe through the Suez Canal and the Red Sea to India or China — found it so difficult to obtain white crews as stokers that they fell back upon lascars or coolies. One may doubt if the old coal-burning stokehole was ever a place for a white man — or indeed for any human being.

But the question is largely academic, for oil is more and more replacing coal as a fuel beneath the boilers of ocean-going craft. Most of the better steamships built since the World War are oil burning, while many older vessels have been reconstructed so as to use that means of making steam. Bunkers have become oil tanks instead of coal mines. Trimmers have disappeared, while firemen, reduced in number, feed their furnaces by the turn of a spigot where once they fought coal and ash and flame with shovels and slicers and their own bodies.

And finally the automobile has dived off the dock and come up in midstream as the motorship. The motorship generates no steam, demands no fires; like the motor car it derives power from the explosion of oil in an internalcombustion engine. The motorship obliterates the fireman as well as the trimmer. The stokehole itself, with its flaming fires, its boiling water, its enervating heat, disappears. There remains only the engine room with its shining cylinders and their leaping pistons.

The day may not be distant when the stokehole will be as obsolete at sea as the three-skysail yarder.

XXX

My Ship Comes In

I thinks about the things that was,
An' leans an' looks acrost the sea,
Till, spite of all the crowded ship,
There's no one lef' alive but me.

. . . .

For they was odd — most awful odd —
But all the same now they are o'er,
There must be 'eaps o' plenty such,
An' if I wait I'll see some more.
— Rudyard Kipling

The passage of the tropics ended practically with our arrival at Teneriffe in the Canary Islands, where we stopped to fill our depleted bunkers with coal. We went on into an ever-moderating zone to Plymouth; finally up the Thames to London and "home." Home at least for most of our crew, although not quite for me. It is curious how that ideal "home" clings to a Briton the world over. He is a person of many peculiarities, of much that is inexplicable, but one can forgive him a great deal for that ideal. New Zealand and Australia are about as far from the tight little island as it is possible to get, yet the Colonial always speaks of it, even the schoolboy, to whom it is only a pink spot on the map, as Home — and he spells it with a capital H. The British Empire is cemented together with those four letters.

In recalling events since, I suppose I was unusually lucky during my travels in getting work ashore whenever I wanted it. On the other hand, I had to submit to long waits in every instance in which I undertook to work my way somewhere by water. My experience convinced me that a person of able body and fair intelligence should not find it difficult to obtain a living for himself, in any part of the world where he knows the language, in any conditions short of famine.

Two things I was advised by my mates aboard the *Lethington* not to do when I looked for work ashore — I was not to say that I was a sailor and I was not to let it be known that I was an American. I disregarded both warnings; and had reason to be thankful for it. Nothing indeed helped me more than an immediate admission of these facts. Possibly a sailor's sobriety and permanence are matters for suspicion when it comes to employment in the large cities of America and England, but in the country — and both Australia and New Zealand are essentially country, even to their principal centers — a sailor is looked upon with almost a boy's admiration for the calling, while his reputation as a "handy man" makes him especially available for the average Jack-at-all-trades job which agricultural communities have to offer.

As to my Americanism, I was warned that I should be discriminated against in favor of Colonials or Englishmen. Perhaps I should have been if I had asked for work of a high grade or against a number of other applicants, but as it happened my nationality helped rather than hurt me. To say that I was an American aroused an interest at the start which otherwise might not have been felt, and as Yankees have a reputation as quick workers, the information swung the balance in my favor whenever there was any chance.

Besides this, going to work as a sailor and an American offered excuses for ignorance and shortcomings in a job after it was obtained which were delightfully convenient.

Whenever I failed in knowledge of some common detail, it was passed over charitably with, "Naturally having worked all your life at sea you wouldn't know it." Or when I was questioned with surprise for doing something in an unheard-of-way, I could always answer blandly, "That's the way we do it in America, you see."

No wonder the outside world gets odd notions of the United States if there are any more abroad like me.

How good a common worker was I? How fitted to earn my living in unskilled labor? To test that, as I explained earlier in my story, was one of the objects of my travels, but I do not know that I can answer the question decisively, even in this last chapter. I managed to hold most of the jobs I had as long as I wanted them, but — ashore, at least — I seldom worked in direct competition with other men and I often found myself inept in operations which, to look at, offered no difficulties.

Strictly speaking, as I have said in an earlier chapter, there is no "unskilled labor." At most the phrase is only relative. To swing a shovel or wield a pick so as to accomplish anything and still not exhaust the worker requires what he modestly calls a "knack" — only another word for experience in that or some similar operation. I often hear some impatient "white collar" worker say complacently, "Well, if I can't make good at this job, I can at least go out and earn a living digging ditches." In nine cases out of ten he couldn't do any such thing; he would quit exhausted, or be laid off by the boss as useless, before half a day was up.

There were times when I asked myself bitterly if I was not a hopeless duffer. I doubt if I was. A duffer, perhaps, but not hopeless. And probably as long as one is not hopeless he is never quite a duffer either.

Although I signed twice during my travels as an able-bodied seaman, I have far too much respect for the calling to imagine that I was one. The British Admiralty held that it took four years to learn seamanship, demanding that a man serve that long afloat before it would examine him for the lowest grade of officer. I doubt if even four years would have made a first-rate sailor of me. To attain proficiency in a ship's work requires so large an exercise of memory and the imitative faculty that one should begin as a boy. As Jack White of the *Lethington* once put it, "The only way t' learn seamanship is from a rope's end in the 'ands o' the bo's'n w'en you're still in yer teens."

None of my bosses at sea thought well of me. The chief mate of the *Lethington* thought I was lazy, the chief mate of the *Empreza* thought I was incompetent, and the third engineer of the *Rimutaka* thought I was cheeky. Probably all were right in their way. Yet the opinion of my comrades, which I held higher, was considerably more — I was about to say charitable, but charity is the last quality which sailors are wont to exercise in judging the work of their fellows. The opinion of my mates was, I believe, more just. A little before we reached New Zealand, outward bound in the *Lethington*, Mick advised me to return to the United States in a sailing ship.

"Don't believe what these other fellas tell yuh that it's sech a dog's life," he said. "It's not so bad. Don't sign as an A.B. er they'll take yer wages out uh yer hide. But you know plenty tuh go as ordinary seaman in a sailin' ship, 'n' I bet yuh'll git along all right."

I took this as a compliment, but I was still more pleased and well-nigh dumbfounded at a comment which White made one evening a little after we had reached Auckland. A wrangle was going on among the sailors as to their respective prowess, when White walked over to me — I was not taking part in the argument — whacked me on the back, and said, "'Ere's the best man in this ship, this bloody Yank."

The remark left me gasping, for White had never befriended me or indeed anybody aboard. Yet no praise has ever made my heart tingle like those few words from that foul-mouthed old reprobate of an able-bodied seaman, Jack White. I should have appreciated the compliment even more if I had not realized that White was half drunk.

No, I cannot claim the title of an able-bodied seaman, nor do I think I succeeded even in the lesser ambition of becoming a "hard nut." "You've got to be a hard nut if you are going to sea," the second mate of the *Northernbay* had advised me during my first experience on a deep-water vessel, and I went aboard the *Lethington* firmly determined to grow an irresistible shell. I doubt if I did. That, like seamanship, must be acquired in one's teens — probably also from a rope's end in the hands of the boatswain. Perhaps in my case there was some temperamental unfitness, anyhow. But although I cannot fairly boast that the end of my voyage around the world left me a "hard nut", I was firmer about the periphery than when I started.

Why do men go to sea? It is an old question, asked most insistently, answered least easily, by those who know life aboard ship with all its monotony, its isolation, its drudgery; who realize the ever-hovering danger, the wanton cruelty, the devilish implacability of the ocean. Men are divided into two classes in their feeling toward the sea: those who love it and those who hate it. It is impossible to explain or reconcile the two attitudes. Those who love the sea do so because, in spite of hardships and perils, there is poetry and power in it too. There are difficulties, and they court them; there is death, but there is also life and conquest and manhood.

Many men, I suspect, go back to the forecastle year after year for the sufficient reason that they can't live anywhere else. Strong men and able in numerous ways, they are often deficient in some point of character which makes conventional life ashore impossible. With a number it is an uncontrollable thirst for alcohol; with some it is an improvidence which leaves them ever penniless in the face of opportunities to spend money; with others it is a restless disposition which makes them unable to stick to a job unless, as at sea, they have to. Whatever the defect is, going to sea is a sign both of weakness and of strength. Of weakness because they are not men enough to be able to live with their fellows ashore. Of strength because they have too much manhood to exist ashore in the social wreckage which the fitter view with pity or contempt.

For myself, I think I have few illusions or delusions about seafarers and the sea. "No man," said Doctor Johnson, "will be a sailor who has contrivance enough to get himself into a jail; for being in a ship is being in jail, with the chance of being drowned." Yet some of the most cherished hours of my life have been passed at sea, and I never view the Blue Peter flying at a steamship's fore, or watch the canvas spread bit by bit as a sailing vessel glides out of port, without a tightening of the throat and the rise of an irrepressible desire to be on board.

Sometimes, too, in my sleep I sense the heave of the ocean beneath me; the straining, whining, grumbling of the ship's parts; the slap, rush, gurgle of the waters at her side. And I see in my dreams the freckled ruddy face, the tousled sandy hair, the pale-blue pugnacious eyes of Able

Seaman Dougherty, while I wake to his brave voice resounding through the forecastle of the *Lethington*, "Ho-o-o, ye weary sle-ep-ers! It's seven bells! Rise and shine!"

What more is there to tell? I left the stokehole of the *Rimutaka* in London a good many pounds thinner and several shades paler than when I began work in Wellington six weeks earlier. Out of my wages as trimmer I bought a steerage passage across the Atlantic in the steamship *St. Louis* and two days later sailed from Southampton for New York. The steerage in those days was less civilized than it has since become, but to one just out of the stokehole it seemed like paradise.

If this were a romance, I surely should have been shipwrecked on the way back and should have ended my adventures by rushing to the home of a sweetheart who had been waiting for me day by day. But in the world's way ships do not always go down nor do sweethearts always wait — for both of which let us be thankful. I should prefer not to conclude with an anticlimax, but what can one do who records events? It is usually that way in life.

I landed in New York with $2.62 besides the penny for luck and the elevated railway ticket with which I came away. Not a great showing for so considerable a time, but I had earned a living and kept my health, seen much and learned a little, and in the long run what more do any of us do?

From the dock in New York I made my way to the nearest elevated-railway station. There I drew from an inside pocket the ticket I had carried around the world. I dropped it in the box and took a train uptown.

The penny? I have it yet.

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